

## **Ark Volume 08**

### **Act 1: Cash Walker**

“Shit.....”

He cursed with a sigh. Things were getting all twisted and dirty. Alan was a part of the so called elite 1% of South Korea. He was born into a rich family and received an education worthy of his background. When he entered a prestigious university, it was natural that he would graduate with top honours. He was always at the heart of the topic and never failed at anything he worked on. Success was something that came naturally for him. It was natural. Out of the 99% of humans, he was part of the 1% elite. It was also like that in New World. And it had been like that until recently. Since he was always at the heart of the topic and had become an enviable existence to everyone. Users ran around until they got nosebleeds obeying Alan and NPCs were the same. However.....

“Ark.....!”

He had screwed up everything. An unexpected siege, an unexpected battle situation and Lariette unexpectedly announced that she would be leaving the guild. He was at the centre of all these events. That’s right, Ark.....!

He didn’t understand why Ark was so good. He didn’t have abundant funds like Alan and he hadn’t been playing longer like the pioneers. Nor did he have a strong organization like Raiden with the Hermes guild. That guy didn’t have anything to boast about yet he kept on grabbing Alan’s ankle.

“I will never let him.”

Alan bit at his lips until it became bloody. If someone looked impertinent then he had to punish them severely. That was the sentiment Alan had about Ark so far. But today Alan realised that he had been too comfortable. He never considered that those guys could do any damage. The stray dogs will become fiercer as they become hungrier and snap unprovoked at a person more excellent than them. It was the lowly nature of guys like that.

‘Then I have to show those guys my power. I’ll show it until those dogs won’t dare bark twice. I’m going to finish him in this siege and end this!’

Alan sneered.

‘After that I can convince Lariette again. What can she do by herself? Although I’m excited thinking about it, I can’t go outside.’

If the situation goes as planned then Alan was sure to win. Alan's side had suffered a lot of damage in the opening campaign. But Alan had succeeded in his original purpose of removing the magicians and catapults. In addition, the presence of one Defense Tower left means that the durability and regeneration of the walls was boosted. The Hermes Alliance also had the burden of having to break the walls within a time limit.

'With one Defense Tower remaining, breaking the walls with no siege weapons will be difficult. If we can endure for 3~4 hours then it is our victory.'

The remaining time was 7 hours. Even if the castle walls collapsed after 4 hours, it would be difficult for the Hermes guild to occupy the castle. The next 3~4 hours were the crossroads in the game! And since Hermes lost the catapults, they would never break down the walls within 4 hours.

'The result of this siege is already clear.'

After visualizing the situation in his mind, Alan gave a relaxed smile. However, his smile didn't last long.

Bang bang double bang!

Suddenly he heard a roar from the window. It was a familiar sound.....a member of the guild immediately identified the sound.

"Alan, those guys have started to attack with the catapults again!"

"What? Catapult?"

"Yes, the situation is urgent. The repair rate of the walls cannot keep up with the damage."

"What nonsense are you saying.....the catapults were destroyed!"

Alan could not understand the situation. Once the siege begins then they were no longer able to procure materials from the outside. Yet they've managed to repair the catapults. The Hermes Alliance must've hired craftsmen to repair it so quickly. But he never received information that any of the NPC mercenaries they hired were craftsmen. Yet they managed to repair the catapults in the end. The catapults had definitely received a lot of damage from his concentrated attacks.

'But how?'

He figured out the reason after he looked over the wall. The NPCs repairing the catapults had pricked ears with a broad tail attached. It was the NPCs mercenaries who had shown up with Ark and Dark Eden and fired the portable cannons that did a lot of damage. Those mercenaries were craftsmen? After he saw Ark standing next to the mercenaries, sparks flew from his eyes.

“Ark! It’s you again?”

“Sir Alan. The remaining Defense Tower also isn’t going to last long. At this rate.....”

“There’s no need to panic!”

Alan roughly ordered and turned his body.

“It doesn’t change the fact that there are only 7 hours left. If we manage to defend the throne for 7 hours then it is our victory. We’ll concentrate all our energies on protecting the castle walls for the moment. And you head to the courtroom and tell the paladins to be prepared.

“The paladins.....you’re using them again?”

“It was a promise with the Archbishop. If the castle is about to be taken away then there won’t be any trouble.”

“I understand.”

The guild members hurriedly ran to give support.

Bang bang double bang!

The rocks flew through the sky at an incredible speed and crashed into the castle wall. It blew debris all over the place with the durability of the walls noticeably decreasing.

‘Wow, this, unbelievable.....!’

Raiden swallowed his saliva as he watched the scene. The raccoon clan had started repairing the catapults and after 2 hours they looked like new. But they didn't simply repair it.

"Hmm, I don't understand."

"Why did they design this part?"

"If they did this then the range and damage would be much better....."

When they first started repairing, the raccoons became confused about the design and started chattering. Ark didn't miss the conversation.

"So you can raise the performance of the catapults if you have the materials?"

"The materials aren't necessary. No, we actually have to remove several things to raise the performance. They put wasteful equipment in which lowered the performance."

"They seemed to have put several unnecessary parts in to ensure that anybody could use it.....if an expert uses it then the continuous shooting speed would be quicker."

"Experts?"

"A craftsman like us."

After his answer Ark heard the sound of pouring gold coins.

"Then wait a minute. I'll ask Raiden if you can convert it."

Ark ran like the wind and explained it to Raiden.

"Upgrade? Then of course they have to remodel it!"

Raiden welcomed the speedy solution with open arms. Then he noticed Ark's face as Ark replied.

"But it requires some valuable materials to convert the catapult. It isn't possible to explain the trade secrets of the NPC craftsmen.....therefore they'll demonstrate the performance but they'll have to operate it directly."

".....Is it money?"

It fit perfectly well. By now, Raiden was able to 100% grasp Ark's nature. Ark was like a cunning merchant as he made a proposal.

“The upgrade cost and labour costs is 30 gold per NPC. So that’s 600 gold in total. How about it? Because of my high intimacy with the NPCs, I finally persuaded them to agree to this repair price. Aren’t you thankful? Please decide as soon as possible. There’s no time.”

He could earn money on the battlefield. Once Ark realised that, he persistently bit at Raiden’s pocket. Although his real profession was Dark Walker, Ark was more like a Cash Walker. And in New World, Raiden was a user strong in a specialized field. It was impossible for him not to figure out that Ark was running a scam. However, it was a situation where even 1 minute was critical!

“.....I’ll put it on the account.”

Raiden wrote up another contract with an expression that looked like he was eating shit.

“That’s it. Now please hurry!”

After taking the contract, Ark hurried back to the raccoons and immediately made them start work. In fact, Ark did not have that much time. Apart from stepping on Alan, the contracts with Raiden relied on him occupying the castle. If he didn’t then Ark wouldn’t get anything. The 100 intermediate recovery potions and all the costs of repairs and upgrades totalled 1,600 gold! If he didn’t win then it would be difficult to claim the money. Fortunately, the raccoons were the best craftsmen NPCs and soon finished all the work.

“This is the upgraded catapult?”

Raiden’s face showed an expression of disappointment when he looked at the changed appearance of the catapult. However, his face brightened after watching the performance. After the remodelling, the range and damage had been upgraded. In addition, it normally took users 4~5 minutes to use it but the raccoons only took 2 minutes! The firing speed was 2 times faster.

.....He was able to confirm its power.

The durability of the walls fell at a faster rate than when attacked by the golems. With the longer range, they didn’t have to worry about the arrows flying from the walls. Ark laughed when he saw that people from Dawn Blade were in a state of panic.

“How is it? Isn’t this worth 80 gold?”

“Well, I guess.....”

Raiden scowled at Ark.

‘What on earth is with this kid? He leads a group of NPCs. And the warrior NPCs are much stronger than usual. And there is also the cats who flew around at the beginning.....how on earth did he manage to hire such NPCs?’

Even though he was a pioneer, he couldn’t imagine Ark’s game system.

‘And why is he so shameless about taking money.....’

Raiden shook his head. He was a very scary guy who would start biting once he found a weakness. In New World, it was the first time that he had seen such a man. Nevertheless, he still felt like swearing. Ark had successfully negotiated the price of the money. Although it was an appropriate price and it was necessary, Raiden was still getting his money stolen. In fact, it wasn’t that different from Ark’s view on life.

‘If you receive a meal, there is no reason to mourn the price.’

While Ark used scams to swindle money, at least he never PKed anyone. But he never does anything free of charge.

Give and take!

Wasn’t it natural that he receives a prize for a favour? Thanks to that mindset, Ark felt no shame even while he was biting at Raiden. After all, when the crisis is over then the Hermes Alliance will immediately become profitable.

Once the catapults were repaired, the Dawn Blade coalition immediately went on the attack. But they couldn’t deal enough damage to the Hermes Alliance. Fugetsu and Dark Eden joined to rally the troops, but the situation was less dangerous because Alan wasn’t there to directly influence them. Once the attack was completely blocked, the Hermes Alliance had a chance to win.

-The 2 Defense Towers were destroyed.

\*The shield applied to the castle walls has been reduced by 100%.

\* The recovery rate of the durability of the walls has been reduced by 100%.

Since the start of the siege, they accomplished the feat in only 19 hours. Noel and Hamanechi had continuously attacked the Defense Tower. Unlike Ark’s forces, they were pushed hard by the defense and only 300 survivors re-joined the main force.

"Currently we have 900 people but those guys have received considerably more damage. Since the Defense Towers are destroyed, it is only a matter of time until the walls fall. Although they have the favourable terrain of the castle to dominate the battle.....it is not enough. No, we will certainly win!"

Raiden became red in the face from repeatedly shouting the good news.

"Keep on attacking! Not long now!"

Raiden waved his mace around and yelled until his throat was sore. Then.....

Tu tu tu tung, kwakwang, kwarururu!

With a roar, the gate and walls eventually fell apart.

"The whole army, charge!"

"Wah ah ah!"

"Sweep them all away. The last victory will go to the Hermes Alliance!"

Raiden and the 900 users rushed into the castle shouting wildly. There was no place for the Hermes Alliance or Dawn Blade coalition to withdraw anymore. It was the final decisive battle!

A fierce battle was waged as if a match was thrown into oil. While airplanes holding missiles flew about and a number bomb destroyed several hundred thousand people in modern warfare, the one that inserted their flag at the end in the enemy camp was the infantry.

War in New World was no different. The magicians and priests from both sides had already fallen. The only thing left was the warriors with high health and defense. Which one had the higher level? Who had stronger equipment or had more potions? It was those things that would determine the final result. But it was a little bit different battling inside the castle compared to when they were fighting outside. It wasn't a vast empty plain. Inside the castle, it was densely packed. In other words, it meant that the hundreds of people couldn't just stampede into the castle. The watchtowers were also placed in strategically important positions. From the standpoint of the attackers, they had to quickly take off the various facilities with as little damage as possible!

On the other hand, the results depended on how long the other side could defend and hold out. Of course, this required more advanced tactics than all-out war. In that sense, Raiden was a professional.

"There is no need to rush. After the walls crumbled, the morale of those guys are already at the bottom. Hermes and Silver Moon will take the front while Noel and Hamanechi will take the left and right. Fugetsu and Dark Eden will deal with the remaining forces. Now 2nd line, advance and occupy the watchtowers in the front!"

Raiden quickly ordered simultaneously.

Square, barracks, and above the collapsed walls.....the warriors' bloody battles spread out all over the place. Ark and the survivors of Dark Eden were also in the middle of the confusion.

"Now it's time to get revenge for Hyungs, Jjak-tung!"

Tazza breathed out hot air from his nostrils and lifted his dagger. The thieves, Cross and the Meow all followed. However, Ark became surprised and shook his head.

"No, Dark Eden will stay in the back and assist."

"What?"

"We've already received considerable damage. Unless the battle situation becomes worse, there is no reason to go out and receive more damage. Our purpose for coming here is to defeat Alan. But if we die without even seeing Alan's face then how unfair will that be?"

"Certainly but....."

"But.....the people who've died.....as the leader of Dark Eden, won't you let us fight and defend their honour?"

Cross said as he couldn't agree with the decision. Ark sighed and shook his head.

"Yes, I know that it isn't suitable behaviour for a knight. I will take the blame. But losing you will be even more painful than your condemnation. Since my cowardly self cannot stand to see any of the Sylphid Knights die. I'll receive all your criticisms as long as you concentrate and survive. I'm not asking, this is a command."

"Ark.....You are really.....!"

Cross looked at Ark impressed. He was a commander who thinks of the lives of his soldiers more than his honour! What kind of soldiers wouldn't follow such a commander? The rehabilitation members and the thieves also nodded with a face as impressed as Cross'.

"I'll follow your command."

Ark breathed a sigh of relief.

'I cannot lose any more NPCs!'

Thanks to the repeated combat, Dark Eden was severely damaged. Including JusticeMan and Roco, 6 members of the rehabilitation group had died with only 4 surviving. Out of the 70 NPCs, 30 had died. It was understandable since it would be difficult to take part in the war with their levels. But after considering the damage, Ark had to make a decision. Since it was likely that they would win the battle, there was no need to go out and receive unnecessary damage. Then Cross asked in a worried tone.

"But to fight like that in such a confusing battle....."

"Don't worry about it."

Ark smiled towards Fugetsu's guild Leader Baron and shouted.

"Baron-nim, please go forward first."

"Yes? Us?"

"We're just handling the remnants in the rear. All of them will have received considerable damage so it is possible for Fugetsu to handle it."

"Of course, but Dark Eden can also do that....."

Baron hesitated and said. Ark gave a friendly laugh and replied.

"We have already decided the proceeds at stake already. But aren't the other guilds supposed to get a stake depending on how much achievements they have? It is a great opportunity for some accomplishments."

"T-then.....?"

"We destroyed the Defense Tower together. Therefore Fugetsu is on the same level as other guilds. We'll definitely support from behind so just give everything you have into fighting!"

"Wow, thank you very much! Everyone charge!"

Every time they killed an enemy in the siege, they got a point. When the siege finishes, the leader of the alliance will give compensation based on the contribution.....it was merit system. However, Fugetsu were just advancing during the Defense Tower attack so didn't receive that much points. Because of that, Baron

received glared from his guild. After Ark drove home his point, Baron didn't hesitate to rush out and attack the enemies.

But it was too late. People in the Dawn Blade coalition were quite strong. Fugetsu were the weakest in the Hermes Alliance and couldn't kill the opponents.

"These bastards are only level 130 yet they're still trying to attack us?"

"Did they become overconfident just because the walls collapsed?"

"Ugh, these guys.....are strong!"

The Baron became confused after his rush was pushed back. And he tried to retreat too late and the path behind was already blocked. Ark and Dark Eden pushed towards where Fugetsu was.

"Don't panic! We can win."

"Everybody gather! Help out the Fugetsu guild!"

Ark pretended to care and fired the cannons blindly as they pushed through enemy territory towards Fugetsu. Thanks to that, Baron and Fugetsu had no choice but to fight the enemy with even more determination.

"Damn, since Dark Eden is helping out like that it isn't possible to run away....."

"Sink or swim!"

Eventually Fugetsu became Dark Eden's shield thanks to Ark's plan.

'If this continues then it will become difficult.'

Ark summoned Dedric and ordered.

"Mmm, the fragrant smell of blood from the battlefield is stimulating my appetite."

"Stop sounding like a pervert and look around from the sky. Tell me if any enemy unit tries to join up with the ones Fugetsu are fighting. Let me know the location in coordinates."

"Sheesh, always making me do these kinds of things!"

Although Dedric complained, he clearly did as ordered.

"Master, there are three or four guys moving at your 3 o'clock."

“Okay, artillerymen move to the right and shoot them!”

“Master, there is a guy playing dead at your 8 o’clock.”

“Hyung-nims, please step on him!”

With Dedric’s help, Ark was able to use the artillerymen with their cannons to defeat the enemy. Since Ark couldn’t afford for Baron to die, he swung his sword and intercepted the opponents. Meanwhile, Ark also summoned Deimos after recovering his spiritual power.

“Deimos, be prepared for any surprises and protect the artillerymen as well as Cross.”

Clack clack, clack clack clack!

Thanks to Deimos defending in front of the artillerymen, a perfect formation was made.

‘Huhuhu, this is like I’m swimming on land.’

Anyway, the nearby enemies also fell thanks to the efforts of Fugetsu working together. And after 3 hours passed, the events were slowly decided. When they collided outside, there were some doubts about how the levels of people in Dawn Blade were so high. But compared to the Hermes Alliance, they were somewhat lacking.

“I’ve captured the barracks!”

“The East Watchtower was knocked out!”

“We’ve also overwhelmingly dominated the battle in the annex!”

“There is no more power to stop our advance!”

The good news was conveyed.

“It was a tough fight but everyone has done well.”

Raiden looked at his forces with thrilled eyes. After a long battle, they’ve finally reached the final stop in Silvana.

“The resistance has 300 forces left!”

“Okay, the end is in sight! All the remains is the Hall of Glory! Without a doubt, Alan will be prepared for a conflict there. Except for the ones still fighting, all troops rush the Hall of Glory!”

Raiden entered the castle leading 300 people. Ark quickly grasped the opportunity and led Dark Eden. Thanks to Fugetsu falling for Ark’s temptations to fight, Dark Eden was able to join the main forces without any damage. Of course, Raiden wouldn’t eagerly fight until the end. With the military situation tilted, the safest place was next to Raiden. If he was near Raiden who was the leader of the Hermes Alliance, he could avoid any danger until the decisive moment. He would also get the chance to strike the final blow to Alan.

‘Okay, now should I watch the figure of Alan fall?’

“Kill everybody visible!”

Raiden was in good spirits and moved to the upper floor. And they finally arrived at a place blocked by a huge iron door.

Hall of Glory!

It was the room inside the castle that symbolized the Lord’s control. The iron door that was battered by the warriors’ maces and Ark’s cannons soon shattered.

“Alan, there’s no place for you to run to!”

“Damn it, stop them!”

Alan’s desperate voice was heard from a corner. The two groups clashed with a violent ringing sound that shook the room. Dawn Blade’s last line of defense in the Hall of Glory numbered 250 people. They were also the members selected from the guild with considerable skills. But the Hermes Alliance had 300 people. They also had an overwhelming strength thanks to the pioneers.

“Oh spirit of deterioration, turn everything to ashes. Hellfire!”

Jewel and Duke had survived the battle and used their wide area skills. A fire pillar roared and moved around while dozens of arrows came pouring down like a shower. Since the magicians and priests had died, the power of the wide area skill was absolute. Following Raiden’s commands, the warriors quickly cornered their opponents and Dawn Blade’s health steadily decreased. However, soon a wide area magic was also invoked from someone in Dawn Blade.

“Blades of wind, Tornado!”

“Kuaaaak!”

Numerous blades swept through the Hermes Alliance. Users who had low health collapsed.

“Sheesh, these guys still had a magician left?”

Raiden cursed and looked at the magician.

Ark reflexively looked and felt momentarily breathless. The last magician in Dawn Blade.....standing next to Alan was the elf Lariette.

‘Still.....you’re alive.....’

At that time Raiden shouted.

“Duke, shoot that woman!”

Duke quickly held his posture and pulled the bow taut. After using wide area magic, Lariette had exposed her body! It wasn’t a situation where she could avoid Duke’s sniper skills. But why? Ark grasped the situation and ran forward, blocking Duke’s view.

“What are you doing, you idiot!”

Duke shouted at Ark and fired the arrow. But thanks to the late timing, the arrow bounced off Alan’s shield.

“Such a stupid child.....!”

Duke spat out, but Ark ignored him to give a bittersweet look towards Lariette hiding behind Alan’s body.

‘Doing such a thing even after Lariette chose Alan.....’

She had been with Alan for a long time. But when he saw her helping Alan on the battlefield, he couldn’t help feeling terrible. A defeated feeling or maybe a feeling of betrayal.....but Ark still didn’t want to see her die. Even there was a chance to attack with the artillerymen many times, Ark didn’t give the order. But he knew he couldn’t take such an ambiguous attitude forever.

It had been 20 minutes since the battle started and 400 users had already collapsed in the Hall of Glory. Combining the remaining troops from both sides, there were 130 people left. Only 30 of them were from Dawn Blade. If someone saw the chance then they would attack Lariette. On the other hand, for long distance attacks they only

had Duke and the artillerymen from Dark Eden. Since Ark blocked Duke, the only chance was Dark Eden's artillery. Once or twice was fine, but if he kept on protecting her then he wouldn't be able to feign ignorance anymore.

'Yes, this is war. She knows that too.'

Ark sighed and ordered the artillerymen to target Lariette.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! A violent sound suddenly came from the rear of the Hermes Alliance. Ark flinched and turned around with a look of horror. What appeared to be the paladins came rushing in and squeezed the Hermes Alliance into a wedge formation.

"Are they.....?"

He had forgotten about it. When they smashed the front gates, the 20 cavalry troops that came out with Alan! Although a few of them had fallen in the confusion outside, there were still 17 left.

"He wanted them to rush us from the back!"

The 17 paladins joined forces with the remnants of Dawn Blade and trampled the Hermes Alliance.

"Heh, did you think I would give this room to you so easily?"

Alan's face was filled with confidence.

-You have acquired 1 Intermediate Recovery Potion.

Ssak.....

Snake checked the information window and sighed. Snake had been wandering the battlefield and became covered in dust and blood.

'There might be some useful items that have dropped. I only believe in you, Snake.' After receiving Ark's order, it had spent many hours searching. Snake searched the corpses really eagerly in order to please Ark. When something glittered, it crossed the battlefield with determination and swallowed it.....

Ssak, ssak ssak ssak

Snake raised its shabby face. Ark's face flashed through its head. Snake knew. Ark had a happy look on his face whenever he saw money, not to mention items. In fact, Snake didn't know the value of items but worked hard to learn what 'items that would become money' for its Master. But so far it hadn't eaten anything of use. All it had swallowed was a couple of potions. If Snake returned like this then Ark would probably be quite disappointed.

Ssak.....

Tears welled up in Snake's blues eyes.

'I'm counting on you Snake.' Ark's voice was going around its head. But it didn't eat an item of worth that would make Master satisfied.

Maybe Ark would think that Snake was like Dedric and Deimos. That would be so unfair and vexing. It just wanted to please Master in every way possible.....but why was it so incompetent? Eventually tears flowed down Snake's innocent face.

Suddenly a message window flashed in front of Snake.

You have manifested a new power.

Stalking (Beginner, Species Characteristics): You have gained a new skill thanks to your efforts in searching for something hidden. Your tongue has the ability to connect the sense of touch and smell together. It is possible to identify everything around you using the tip of your tongue and you can even identify what direction to go to if there is a collection of targets. This ability will provide crucial clues to keep track of hidden items and enemies.

<You can find all items in a 200 metre range. In addition, you can determine the direction of movement by looking at past traces for 1 hour. When the level rises, the range and search time will increase.

Mana consumption: 30>

Ssak?

Snake's eyes widened.

In fact, stalking was a skill that an Alamone Larvae would learn when it was born from its mother. However, Snake grew up with Ark so it didn't have that opportunity. After wandering off from its owner and swallowing items, it naturally

learned the skill. Although the information window was supposed to appear in front of Ark, Snake was too far away. Snake who couldn't read didn't understand the contents, but it felt like its senses were keener.

Swaeek.....swaeek!

It immediately flicked its tongue and smelled something plausible from far away. It was a familiar smell, the smell of items worth money that Ark liked. Snake immediately followed the smell. And after a while, it discovered a paladin's body. With a body that had ripened, it was one of the cavalry riders that had harassed Ark. Snake became angry and struck the paladin with its tail. That guy deserved to die for pestering Master. As revenge, Snake crawled underneath the armour. As expected.....a gauntlet was buried in the corpse.

-You have acquired 'Gauntlet of Glory.'

Swaek! Saek saek saek!

Snake swallowed it and immediately screamed. Although it wasn't able to verify the information window- but with just a look- it was able to instinctively sense money. Now it was able to return Master's expectations. Snake looked around with greedy eyes. It wanted to find other things. Unfortunately, the gauntlet was the only item there. It wasn't possible so Snake was about to move to another place.

"Now. A lot of the Dawn Blade members were killed but there is still hope. In this battle, a blow in the back can also reduce moral!"

The paladins suddenly rushed charging out and rushed to the rear of the attacking forces. Snake who was hiding under the corpses became worried and secretly chased after them. The armoured knights would drop fairly good items. If they were going to fight then some of them would die and it could pick up the items. In other words, if Snake followed them then there was another chance to get good items.

Saek saek saek.....

There was a grin at Snake's mouth.....a familiar smile. It was an expression that was normally seen on Ark's face.

## **Act 2: Final Winner?**

"Heung, even with that it's only going to extend the time until you lose. Crush them!"

Raiden led the troops and rushed in. Although 30 people died from the paladins' surprise attacks, the Hermes Alliance still had around 100 people. On the other hand, with the paladins the Dawn Blade coalition only had 50 people. The difference was twice as much. In addition, the damage of the paladins weren't that strong. While on horseback outside the castle, their offensive dealt heavy damage to the magicians, but most of the users gathered in the Hall of Glory were users with high defense. It wasn't so easy to hurt them. No, since they had twice as many troops then there was still a large difference.

"Ark, it is time for the final stage. Let's go!"

"No, please wait a moment."

Ark stood in front of Jjak-tung and said. In this situation it was clear that the Hermes Alliance had the overwhelming advantage but.....

'What on earth?'

Ark looked at Alan strangely. Alan definitely looked uneasy before. But when the paladins appeared he immediately changed. He just sat back and watched the Hermes Alliance attack with a relaxed face. It was like a subtle sense of provocation was coming from him.....!

Ark was soon able to confirm the ominous feeling.

"Kill the enemies with the power of God, Divine Field!"

The moment the two troops were about to crash into each other, Alan used a wide area magic. A blue light spread like a wave along the floor. But the soldiers from the Hermes Alliance didn't pay any attention. Alan's Holy Knight skills were fairly well known. It was natural because Alan was famous. Among them, the holy magic that only exerted a lethal force on the undead. However to normal monsters and users it wasn't an intimidating skill. If it was damage received from a distance, then it would deal at most 70 damage. It was like a tickle for warriors with health around 3000 points.

"Just ignore it!"

"Heh, he probably wants to save mana.....is that why he's using these skills?"

"It is lucky that we've managed to back Holy Knight Alan into a corner."

The warriors snorted and laughed. However, it didn't take long until it turned into screaming.

“Divine field!”

The armour of the knights abruptly became white and red hot at the same time the spell was chanted. The floor became so hot that it turned blue. Including Alan it was 18 people! The divine field overlapped 18 times. The wide area magic dealt 1000 damage!

“Keuahahak!”

The fierce warriors had their health decreased by half as they were wrapped in the blue flames. The warriors who were barely out of the range quickly pulled out potions to recover from the incredible damage. Surprised words emerged from Raiden’s mouth.

“What, what the? Isn’t Divine Field a special skill of the Holy Knight?”

“T-then.....these guys are all Holy Knights?”

“No way!”

Cries of shock and distress burst from the Hermes Alliance. And Raiden roughly shook his head.

“That’s impossible. Holy Knight is a hidden profession. It isn’t possible to change professions so easily!”

“Yes, they must have used other magic to cheat!”

“Divine field has a long cool down.”

“It must be the last desperate struggle. Don’t be scared to attack!”

The warriors swung their weapons and ran up again. Then Alan smiled and murmured coldly.

“It is certainly the last desperate struggle. But that last struggle isn’t something so trivial. Defense Aura, Elemental Aura and Warrior’s Strength!”

He overlapped 3 of the Holy Knight’s special skills! Alan raised their defense, strength and elemental resistance, as well as increasing their willpower and total health by 20%. The Holy Knight’s skills were strongest in a group! But since there were 2 times as much troops it wouldn’t make that much difference. No, it couldn’t be. However.....

“Defense aura, Elemental aura, Warrior’s Strength!”

Once again the knights' armours glowed so they were using the same skill? At the same time, the aura was overlapped 18 times. It was an enormous boost in defense and health! Even the attacks of the level 180 pioneers weren't able to properly hit. In addition, the health went up so much that it didn't even appear to decrease. Since they were unable to hit them, the soldiers ran around attacking the other members while avoiding Alan and the knights.

"Come on, there is only 40 minutes left."

Alan said in a relaxed tone as he looked out the window. On a hill far away, the hourglass that signalled the siege deadline was already reaching the bottom. Alan only had to hold out for 40 more minutes. If no one occupied the throne then the siege would've failed.

"Everybody start shooting at once!"

After seeing the situation, Ark ordered the bombardment to start. However, the attacks were blocked by the knight's shields.

.....It was truly impregnable!

"What, what is up with these ridiculous guys.....!"

Raiden's face darkened. Since the knights protected Alan and the throne in a circular formation, there was no way to access it. Also, the damage dealers such as magicians or thieves had all died a while ago thanks to their low defense. In this situation, he didn't know if they could get through the knight's wall of defense in the time limit. No, if they tried to attack with force then they might get exterminated instead.

"Damn, there's not much time remaining.....!"

Raiden's lips went dry at the sight of the falling sand. Ark was also impatient as well. He had thought it was over. So what was with the absurd turn at the last moment? If this siege failed like this then all his efforts would be for nothing. Sid would rot in prison and he wouldn't be able to get his 5,000 gold back. But was that all? The potions and repair costs that he would've received from Raiden would disappear into thin air. The damage would be thousands of gold.....!

It was just like a death sentence for Ark.

'Even if I die, I have to make the siege succeed!'

It happened when Ark started getting restless.

Saek saek saek?

He heard a familiar sound at his feet. When Ark lowered his head, Snake immediately climbed up and rubbed against his face.

‘Eh? Why is Snake here?’

Ark soon had a strange thought in his head. While Snake’s charm always made Ark laugh, now was not the time for Snake to be playing. However, whenever Snake rubbed its body against Ark it meant that it had something to vomit out. And it would move its head from side to side as if asking for praise.

‘Ah, that’s how Snake looks when it has collected something that I would praise it for. Then.....’

Ark took a deep breath and removed the item. After looking at the information window, he felt refreshed and full of ideas.

Gauntlet of Glory (Rare)

Armour type: Steel Gauntlet

Defense power: 75

Durability: 55/90

Weight: 70

User restriction: Level 150 or more Holy Knight.

A gauntlet filled with amazing power that was specially designed for Holy Knights who have received God’s ancient power. Ordinary people could never find or even use this gauntlet. In addition, if the Holy Knight doesn’t serve the ancient God of the religion that manufactured the gauntlets then they won’t be able to draw out the gauntlet’s true power.

<Option: Strength +10, Health +500>

<Special Option: You can use the power of ‘Divine Copy.’ Divine Copy can reproduce any Holy Magic from the same religion. However, you can’t select the target that the spell is applied to and the same magic will only have 70% of the original skill. If the person who you replicated the skill from dies or escapes from a 10 metre range then the copied magic is cancelled.

Mana consumption: 300 >

A rare item! Although the stats weren't that amazing for a rare item, that wasn't the important part.

'Divine copy?'

It was a special option that could replicate the magic of other people!

When he saw that option, all of Ark's questions were answered. Although it was a hidden profession, there was no law that there could only be one person with that occupation. However, in order to maintain the uniqueness of the profession the system would have to limit it. If so, having 18 people with the same hidden profession didn't make sense. Moreover, there would be a problem with the balance of the game if there were that many Holy Knights.

'The answer is the gauntlet!'

Ark stared at the knights suspiciously. Not surprisingly, they were all wearing gauntlets and items similar to what Snake vomited up. Now he understood the situation. The knights didn't use magic. They were only able to perform the magic after Alan used it first. It was the action of Divine Copy. Alan also didn't use another skill because once he did then Divine Copy would end.

'But for 17 people to have the same rare sacred item.....'

That was already a scam. But if he interpreted it differently than it was easy to figure out. It was extremely difficult to change professions to a Holy Knight. In order to use 'Divine Copy,' the knights had to belong to the same sect as Alan. The sect which recognized Alan as a Holy Knight was the god of balance, Asyeosu.....the 17 knights must also belong to that religion to use the sacred item. Thanks to the conditions it wasn't that easy to equip it.

'In other words.....Those knights are NPCs!'

There was no doubt. When the second clash was occurring outside the courtyard, the cavalry troops didn't move. Unlike users, NPCs had to take a break as well.

'Those knights must be dispatched by the Cathedral since Alan has a close relationship with the Cathedral and its bishops.'

Even though he felt angry, Ark couldn't really complain. After changing professions to a Dark Walker, Ark also had close relationships with NPCs.....because of that he

received the help of the raccoons and Meow. That might actually be the biggest advantage of a hidden job.

‘Now let’s pull myself together. Those guys are practicing a swindle.....thanks to that I found a way to penetrate the barrier. The way to destroy ‘Divine Copy’ is to deal with Alan who is the one being copied. But.....’

There was no way to avoid the knights and fight against Alan 1-on-1. If he received a concentrated attack from the knights then he wouldn’t be able to last for one minute. Slowly an idea started to form as he organized his thoughts. Alan was looking out the window overlooking the hourglass.

‘Okay, I have no choice but to try. There isn’t that much time left. If I defeat Alan then the Hermes Alliance will win the siege. All the problems will be settled. If I take him out then it won’t be a problem even if I die!’

Ark stroked Snake’s head and solidified his resolution.

“Snake, good work. If I win this siege then you will receive the number 1 merit.”

Ssak? Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake nodded with a happy face.

“Dedric, you stick to the ceiling and pay attention. Notify me if you spot any of the enemy’s movements from there. Prepare yourself. If you miss even one.....”

“I got it. You don’t have to threaten me like that!”

Dedric moved to a shadowed place and hid behind a chandelier. Once everything was prepared Ark grabbed his sword and shouted.

“Raiden, please make concentrated attacks on the right side. Dark Eden will concentrate on shooting the left!”

“What? What did you say?”

Raiden frowned as he replied. But since Dark Eden was concentrated on shooting the left side, he was force to attack the right. Once the knights moved to the left and right, there was a slight gap in the middle. The others might not dare to squeeze through such a small gap but Ark was different!

“Dark Dance!”

Ark squeezed like a ghost through the gap between knights. With Dark Dance he was able to get through no matter how small the gap using tricky footwork, but because it was so complicated he had to concentrate on the footprints on the floor. It was a fatal drawback because he couldn't see the movements of the enemies but.....

"The knight is swinging his sword. The knight is coming from the front, and the knight on your left side is trying to hit you with his shield!"

Ark was able to imagine the movements of the enemies thanks to Dedric's voice. Thanks to that he could concentrate on his footwork and slip between the knights and through the gap. When Ark was close then Alan would hide himself behind the knights' bodies. Therefore Ark completely missed Alan's position. But if wasn't possible to avoid the eyes of Dedric who was watching from above.

"Alan's position is?"

"Behind Master's right side, on your 5 o'clock!"

"Here? Dark blade!"

Ark rotated his body like a spinning top and quickly used Dark Blade. It was the Dark Dance and Dark Blade chain skill Dark Strike! A critical attack that ignored the defense! In front of Dark Blade, the various buffs had no meaning. Ark continuously tracked and attacked Alan with Dark Strike and then keeping his distance using Dark Dance. However, Alan only had a moment of confusion.

"Heh, those are your special moves?"

Compared to a warrior's health, the damage of Dark Strike was only a small amount.

'Sheesh, is it impossible like expected?'

"Bah, this stupid guy just stepped into his grave. Holy Light!"

Alan pushed Ark with his shield and chanted a holy spell. When he finished, a small ball of light formed around Alan's head like a ring of sunlight.

-Your dark attribute bonus has been turned off by 'Holy Light.'

'What? My dark attribute bonus.....!'

Ark's face darkened. Since the siege started at 6 a.m. in game time and lasted three days, the current time was 5 a.m. Dawn was coming but it was still the time ruled by a Dark Walker! It was because of his dark attribute bonus that Ark could fight Alan evenly in the middle of the enemies. But if it was turned off.....

"I guessed right. Your damage was somewhat strong compared to your level....."

Alan ridiculed him with a chilly laugh and swung his sword. Unlike before, he felt his health falling from that one blow. His defense and stamina had increased because of his dark attribute bonus so it was an inevitable result. In addition, the Holy Knight's attack applied an additional damage bonus to the darkness attribute.

Ark was pushed back by Alan's shield. The attacks from the knights and users were flying all over the place. Dozens of swords and maces headed straight to a weakened Ark. In just a few moments his health fell and he was in a critical condition.

"This, this is! Support Ark!"

Raiden and the warriors ran over but weren't helpful. Alan gathered the knights to block Raiden and ran up to Ark. Since Ark's health was depleted, his expression indicated that he felt confident enough to deal with Ark.

"Huhuhu, you stupid bastard!"

'Now!'

Ark's eyes flashed. Ark didn't rush recklessly. This chance could only be grabbed once. The 1-on-1 fight with Alan in front of the window was all for this moment!

"Let's finish this to the end!"

Ark rushed up to Alan. Alan flinched and swung his sword but Ark avoided it and attacked. And he gripped the waist tightly with both hands. It was the wrestling move he learned from the National Police gym! Ark lifted Alan using the force of his waist and ran towards the window. It was then that Alan noticed Ark's plan.

"What? What, what are you doing.....do you intend to die together?"

"Don't mess around. The only one who will die is you!"

Alan screamed and grabbed the window frame.

"Larriette-nim, what are you doing? He is dying. Your magic.....!"

Ark flinched and turned his head. He finally noticed that Lariette was standing restlessly near Alan. Ark looked at her and shook his head slightly. Then Lariette who was chanting a spell winced, and whether intentional or not cancelled the spell. At that moment, Ark was saved.

‘Lariette-nim.....!’

“Son of a bitch.....Holy Knights!”

The knights turned around as they responded to Alan’s voice and swung with both hands. With their destructive power, one hit from the mace would kill Ark. However, Ark stared blankly at Lariette before he suddenly shouted and released a burst of light.

“Hahaha, I’m not afraid anymore! Summon release, summon Deimos!”

Clack clack clack!

Deimos loudly stopped the attack from the mace with his shield. Deimos bounced back from the impact into Ark’s back, forcing Alan to release his hands from the windowsill in shock. At the moment Ark and Alan, as well as Deimos fell out the window.

“Huk.....!”

The Hall of Glory was on the top floor of the castle. The height was 30 metres from the ground. When thrown from such a place, Alan immediately began to panic. One of a warrior’s greatest fears is falling while clad in steel armour. However, Ark would also suffer in this situation.

“Summon release, Deimos! Snake, sword!”

Ark sent Deimos back and took out a sword. Now, it’s time to settle this!

“Blade Storm!”

The sword shattered in front of Alan’s nose and caused a storm. Alan was sucked into the debris and his health declined rapidly. But it was not the end. Before the effects of Blade Storm disappeared, Alan was forced upside down. In regards to falling damage, defense was meaningless. Thanks to the attack from Blade Storm, he fell even faster. Thanks to his health as a warrior, Alan was like a cockroach and avoided instant death but he only had 5% of health left. On the other hand, Ark was able to reduce the fall damage by 80%. Thanks to Blade Storm and the fall damage, Alan was collapsed at Ark’s feet and only need 150 more damage to die.

"You, you bastard.....!"

Alan stuttered and glared at Ark. However, he was stunned since he received falling damage while wearing steel armour. The only resistance Alan could do was stare at Ark. Ark raised his body and slowly approached Alan.

"Alan, if you wanted to show off then you should've picked a rival who was more insignificant."

"Ark, absolutely.....I will not leave silently....."

"Then I'll pay you back 2, no three times. Just like Andel."

"You'll definitely regret today.....Cough!"

Snap!

Alan screamed as a sword was driven through his neck. With a snap, his blood came rushing out. Alan continued staring at him as his body convulsed. After a long time, the fight had finally ended. It was a long journey of revenge, but he had no interest once it finally ended. Ark waited until he saw Alan's pulse stop and then collapsed with a thud.

However, the siege was still not over. Ark restored his health using food and went back up to the Hall of Glory. As expected, after Alan died all of the knight's Divine Copy was also cancelled. In addition, using Divine Copy consumed 300 mana. They used it 4 times in succession so they ran out of mana. Without any mana, the Holy Knight was just the same as a normal warrior. Raiden used to chance to unleash his offensive and the knights and remnants of Dawn Blade helplessly fell to the Hermes Alliance.

'Larriette-nim.....'

Ark looked at her body with bitter eyes. But her death was inevitable in order for the Hermes Alliance to win. The fact that she hesitated to help Alan in the last minute meant a lot of to Ark.

'When the situation is stable then I'll meet her again.'

"Damn....you'll soon see!"

While Ark was thinking, the last member of Dawn Blade collapsed.

There was no one who could prevent Raiden from sitting on the throne anymore!

“Finally.....!”

Raiden looked at the throne with red eyes. He had been waiting for this moment for a long time. And the remaining time was only 20 minutes. Even if Alan died, the castle still belonged to Dawn Blade since some members of the guild hadn't taken part in the siege and was still alive. However, Raiden just had to sit in the throne for 20 minutes and it would become his territory. Raiden slowly approached the throne and was about to sit down when he saw Ark standing in the doorway.

“You're alive?”

Then there was a suspicious smile on Raiden's face.

“Good. It wouldn't do to sit down before doing this.”

-Raiden has used the 'Trick' skill.

The alliance with Hermes has been destroyed using Trick!

“What?”

Raiden said with a smile.

“I made an effort during that time. But it ends here.”

“Then the promise.....!”

“Don't you understand? The alliance has finished.”

Ark then began to realise his mistake. That's right, it was the uneasiness he felt when he conceded to his demands so obediently. He had felt it several times. The intermediate recovery potions, catapult repair and renovation costs.....even if it was a war, he had signed the contracts too obediently. It was natural. From the very beginning Raiden had no intention of giving him a single penny. The distribution of the proceeds from the 2 contracts all relied on a prerequisite. That Raiden the leader of the Hermes Alliance would capture the throne and occupy Silvana.

In other words, with the alliance released the contract was just a piece of tissue. However Ark believed that the Alliance Agreement could only be destroyed with the agreement from both sides. He never imagined that there would be a skill which could destroy the contracts. However, Ark didn't fully understand New World yet. Although reality wasn't that different, this was still a game. There were always methods to ignore the rules. No, no matter what kind of meaning it was still a skill!

“Ugh.....I came this far just for this?”

“It was because you were too greedy. I will admit that your role was big in this victory. Therefore I didn’t want to do this. But 30%.....that is too difficult. In this situation, there is no way that I can give you 30% of the proceeds.”

The guild masters standing around Raiden nodded. As expected, Baron the guild master of Fugetsu tried to avoid the attention. Ark realised that all the remaining guild masters had agreed with the results.

“Now, sweep them up!”

Raiden ordered while sitting on the throne. The situation was like a wolf had opened its mouth and ran up to the tiger to be killed. The remaining Hermes Alliance users ran towards Ark and Dark Eden. Nearly 100 Hermes Alliance members were still alive. On the other hand, Ark and Dark Eden only had 45 people. And more than half were artillerymen. It wasn’t a situation where he could fight and win.

‘I have to save the NPCs!’

“Raiden! As a knight you would dare to do such a dirty thing.....!”

Cross couldn’t stand it anymore and lifted his sword. However, Ark grabbed Cross’ collar and ran out.

“Dark Eden, retreat at once!”

Ark exited from the Hall of Glory with Dark Eden. After the 20 minutes were over, everyone except for the Hermes Alliance who had occupied the throne would be expelled from the castle. It was regrettable but at least he could still save the NPCs. However once Ark was considered as an enemy, Raiden wanted to completely exterminate him. Raiden ordered the 100 users to chase Ark. So when he rounded the corner towards the stairs, he was faced with dozens of Hermes Alliance users coming from downstairs.

“Damn, these guys are such dirty bastards.....!”

“Sir Cross, please understand the situation!”

Ark angrily pulled Cross with him and entered the next room. It was a room that had crumbled a little bit from the previous fights!

‘This is it. They can survive 20 minutes here!’

“Pick up the piles of debris and build a barrier in front of the door!”

“What? But it won’t survive more than a few minutes!”

“I don’t have the time to explain! Please do as I say!”

When Ark raised his voice, the members of Dark Eden hurriedly scraped the wreckage and built a barrier. It was a shabby barrier that would collapse when hit by a mace two or three times. But Ark had a magic item that would make it stronger than the castle wall. He pulled out a big tube from his bag. It was the Spirit Body Glue that would stay stuck once attached.

‘The last one.....it is valuable but I can’t lose all the NPCs here in vain!’

Ark bombarded the barrier with the Spirit Body Glue.

-Ooh eh eh eh, I’m out!

-Attach to everything!

The babbling of the Spirit Body Glue was annoying but it was effective. Even if it was hit by the Hermes Alliance, it would not move an inch.

‘Now I can rest assured. But.....’

Once their safety was secured he didn’t both pushing down the anger.

‘Did I really come all the way here just to be betrayed? Even though I have dethroned Alan so I can release Sid.....’

“Huk huk huk, Master! What is going on?”

Dedric had sneaked out of the Hall of Glory by flying through the window. At that moment, a large number of ideas went through Ark’s head. He could change the crisis into an opportunity! Ark suddenly stuck his body to the window.

‘Okay it is worth a try. Even if I fail, it is better to die then leave it like this!’

Ark leaned his body out the window and shouted to Dedric.

“Dedric, there is no time. Quickly suck my blood.”

“Eh eh? What, what the? Master, are you crazy? Was your head hit a little bit too hard?”

“There is no time for your chatter. Shut up and suck it quickly!”

"You really want me to do it? I won't be scolded later?"

"If you say one more word then I'll make tempura out of you!"

"Ah, I understand. Then.....I'll eat well....."

Dedric was shocked by Ark's threat and extended his fangs. He felt like something was being sucked out.....but it still wasn't enough.

"No, that's no it. Suck again!"

Dozens of times.....Dedric happily sucked the blood. Then he heard dozens of footsteps and banging against the barrier. The barrier swayed with every hit. At that moment, a message window flashed in front of Ark.

'I got it!'

"Hahaha, delicious. Master's blood is so delicious!"

"That's enough, stop sucking."

Ark struck Dedric who jumped back. Then he felt a sense of dizziness. However, Ark clenched his teeth and clung to the window.

"Now there's only 10 minutes left. Please hold on until then!"

"What? What are you doing.....eh? Ark!"

Jjak-tung looked bewildered until he suddenly screamed. Ark had climbed out the window. Of course he didn't want to commit suicide. Ark began to move sideways on the ledge outside. Under her foot were distant cliffs. It was enough to give someone anaemia. However, Ark had used his strength to climb up the body of Colossus in order to obtain the Sacred Soil. He moved his body carefully and eventually arrived at his destination. It was the windows in the Hall of Glory that Alan had fallen out of. Ark used 'Stealth' to enter the Hall of Glory.

"I've finally got my hands on Silvana."

"Congratulations."

"With Dark Eden gone the proceeds will be distributed as promised."

"Of course."

Raiden was convinced of his victory and lowered his guard. He never imagined that Ark would use 'Stealth' to sneak into the Hall of Glory.

'The biggest hurdle in the plan is the magician Jewel. I'll have to dispose of Jewel first!'

Ark took out a sword from his bag and approached Jewel.

"Blade Storm!"

"Kuaaak, what, what the?"

Thanks to 'Stealth,' the storm even applied a backstab effect! Extravagant damage was applied and Jewel's health quickly went down to 50%. Jewel had rare armour with high defense or else normal magicians would've had their health decreased by 80%. Jewel stumbled in surprise. At the same time his 'stealth' was deactivated and warriors flocked in the room.

"Ugh, this, this guy.....!"

"You're back? You came back just to die!"

'I don't have to deal with those other guys!'

His health decreased from the attacks flying from everywhere. Ark avoided the offensive of the soldiers using Dark Dance and shouted.

"Dirty scum, I'll beep-beep to guys like you!"

- 'Intimidation' has triggered a critical effect!

He had cursed using all his sincerity. In addition, all of the users here were extremely tired after fighting for 24 hours. Then they received 'Intimidation' just as they were convinced of victory so it was natural that there would be a critical effect. 'Intimidation' was a skill that was influenced by the conditions of the opponent. 100 warriors froze up at once.

"Jewel, I'll kill you!"

Ark immediately used Blade Storm again. Jewel's health fell to 30%. Jewel quickly chanted a spell. That was the moment Ark was aiming for. He waited for the opponent to move first and then used Riposte! Jewel failed the spell and was thrown back by Ark's counterattack.

“Ugh, this, unbelievable.....!”

Jewel had collapsed to the ground before trying to raise her body.....No that was exactly what Ark had aimed for.....the place where Jewel got up was in front of the room where Dark Eden was hiding. The Dark Eden members had already received a command from Ark and aimed their cannons through a gap in the stone before firing simultaneously. A dozen round of ammunition! Jewel was shrouded in white steam and collapsed.

‘I did it!’

Ark turned around after he was sure that Jewel died. But Raiden just laughed and murmured.

“You’re certainly not normal. But what will killing Jewel do? Do you think you can kill the remaining 100 people in 10 minutes?”

“Let’s see?”

Ark said and laughed.

“I’m certain of one thing.”

“.....?”

“The person who makes me his enemy will end up regretting it!”

“Cheeky, kill him!”

Raiden shouted at the 100 users who gathered and brandished his weapons.

“Blessing of the sea!”

A light was emitted from Adelaine’s Necklace as Blessing of the Sea was activated. Was he calling an enormous summon? The Hermes Alliance flinched and tensed up. But the light disappeared after restoring 500 mana and increasing his defense by 40%.

“What the? It just raised the defense?”

“Are you really going to fight with us?”

“That wouldn’t be bad. Dark Dance!”

After Ark recovered his mana he immediately used Dark Dance. At the same time, a gust of wind passed through the 100 warriors. Once he used Dark Dance, it was

inevitable that he would appear like a ghost. However Ark wasn't planning to fight with them. He only avoided the attacks and by the time he reached Raiden, the percentage of completion was 80%. When the percentage of completion rose, his body disappeared like smoke.

He avoided the attacks with millimetres of difference. But the attacks from the 100 people also weren't a joke. Although he avoided most of the attacks, by the time he reached Raiden his health had decreased by 70%.

"Hut!"

Raiden flinched as Ark appeared in front of him like a ghost and drew his mace. But Ark had already started attacking. His ensuring spin kick hit Raiden in the temple. Raiden fell to the ground with his mace.

"Ugh, this child.....until the end.....!"

Ark shot Raiden a look of disdain.

"I never thought I would die but thanks anyway."

"What?"

"Thanks to the betrayal from the Hermes Alliance, Dark Eden became a separate attack group."

"What is that.....?"

"You're more stupid then I thought Raiden. Don't you understand yet? As the 6th in command, I didn't have the right to sit on the throne. But now I'm the group leader of a 3rd force."

"What you're saying is nonsense.....!"

"Would you like to confirm if it's nonsense?"

Ark smiled and sat down on the throne.

Dark Eden's attack captain Ark has sat down on the Throne.

If he manages to defend the throne until the siege ends then the right of a Lord will be granted.

Time remaining in the siege: 5 min.

Raiden let out an astounded laugh.

"You stupid bastard, you thought it would be resolved once you sat down? There is still 5 minutes left. Although it would be an honour for you to die in a place where you've never sat down in your life. Kill him!"

Raiden and the 100 warriors flocked to him. However, Ark shouted while sitting cross-legged in a relaxed manner.

"Dedric, Vampire skill activate! Target Ark!"

"Ooooooooooh!"

Dedric appeared outside the window and activated the skill. At the same time, Ark's body was covered with yellow mucus.

That's right, it was 'Slime's Time!'

It was the reason Ark made Dedric bite him! 24 hours hadn't passed since the last time Ark used Slime's Time. Therefore he couldn't use it again normally. But he looked at Dedric and thought of an ingenious idea. Dedric had the ability to extract a skill from the opponent once he sucked their blood. The problem was whether he could extract a skill from Ark, but fortunately Dedric answered that the first time. He had extracted the 'Harvesting' skill. Ark gained hope and had Dedric repeat it many times until he finally obtained Slime's Time. That was the reason why Ark relentlessly killed Jewel.

There was a weakness in the invulnerability of Slime's Time. It completely blocked physical attacks but was vulnerable to attack magic, and Jewel was a magician that was still present in the Hall of Glory. However, once Jewel died then Ark was invincible! Once Slime's Time was activated, both swords and maces slipped off. The warriors looked perplexed.

"This, what on earth is this ridiculous thing.....!"

"Pudding? A pudding?"

"This skill is a ridiculous trick. Is that what you think Raiden? Yes, you don't know the skill. And in New World, if someone doesn't know something then they could die. But the skill is not a trick."

Ark said in a cold tone as he was covered in slime. The time remaining was 4 minutes.....if he held on for 4 minutes then he would obtain Silvana. Noticing the urgent situation, Raiden lifted his mace and shouted.

"This guy uses a strange skill. So just pull him down from the throne!"

The warriors began to pull Ark. However Ark firmly held onto the throne. He used the techniques he learned working to survive every day and held on. Thanks to that, his arms and hands were as strong as a wrestler. Since his body was sleek, it was hard for them to grab him.....the warriors eventually gave up catching him and started punching instead. However, Ark had no intention of dying.

'Hang in there. Just 3 minutes left!'

Yes, the violence really fit the realistic game as his face became swollen and he got a nosebleed. But there was no time to think about the pain. Ark clenched his teeth and held out against the pain. And he shouldered the pain until the time ran out. Loud horn sounds came from outside before a message window popped up.

The time limit for the siege has been completed.

The person who has occupied the throne is Dark Eden's attack leader Ark.  
According to the siege rules, Ark has now become the rule of Silvana.

Using the Lord's special skill 'Authority,' you can banish all remaining enemies from the premises.

<You have acquired the castle of Silvana. Fame +3000>

<You have acquired a bonus for capturing the castle with less than 100 people:  
Experience for all the group members who survived +250,000>

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.

Thanks to the bonus he acquired 5 levels.

"Oh.....oh my god!"

All colour disappeared from Raiden's face. Ark slowly lifted his head. His face was crushed like dough by the warriors' fists but there was the proud smile of a winner on his face.

"I've obtained the castle. Now if you'll please leave my castle? Expulsion!"

At the moment an intense light flashed and the Hermes Alliance was forced from the castle. The person who occupied the throne after a long battle.....was Ark!

“Hum.....wasn’t today the last day of the castle siege?”

Ho Myung-hwan stretched and yawned as he searched the information window. Since there were 12 castles in Nagaran, there were always two sieges happening every day. One of his morning routines was to monitor the name of any new users that showed up in the siege information. It was in order to understand the overall system as well as keeping an eye on the influences of strong guilds.

“The Lord of Baltania has changed. Indeed, the Boramae guild and their allies were too weak to keep the castle. They didn’t have deep pockets and didn’t waste any money on defense, only attack. It will be hard for the Boramae guild to recover.”

Ho Myung-hwan clicked his tongue and muttered. In fact, Ho Myung-hwan had a keen eye about the situation in Nagaran. The assumption that they would receive a huge tax once they occupied the castle was a misconception from the users. NPCs in New World are clever- the kings and Archbishop set up the Shrine of War in order to set safeguards for those sorts of situations. Sooner or later they’ll discover the truth, but the users would have to defend the castle for at least a month before receiving any proceeds from it. It was only then that the NPCs would recognize them as the Lord.

“However, the kings receive a tax that hasn’t decreased at all.....ha! In this instance the NPCs are cleverer than the users. Even so, it is a gamer’s dream to become a Lord.”

Ho Myung-hwan made a wry smile and searched for information on the next castle.

“Now, the next castle is Silvana? Well.....it should be Alan.....eh?”

Ho Myung-hwan stopped moving his mouse. But no matter how many times he rubbed his eyes and looked at the monitor, the results were still the same.

“Alan had the castle taken away? And the user who became the new Lord is.....!”

Surprisingly, the name that came up in the information window was one that he knew well. It was one of the candidates that he was recently paying attention to, Ark!

“Ark! Ark managed to take Silvana away from Alan?”

Ho Myung-hwan quickly opened all the information that had been registered at the Shrine of War. However, he felt like he was lost in a maze the more he looked at it.

"This, what on earth is this? First Alan accepted a challenge from the Hades guild.....was the Hades guild destroyed on the verge of the siege by Ark? No, it is okay up to there. But what is up with the data that comes afterwards? What the hell happened?"

Including the Hermes Alliance and Dawn Blade coalition, a total of 11 guilds took part in the siege. Ark occupied the lowest seat of command in the Hermes Alliance and participated in the siege. In fact, he only had the power to command. Unless all those above him were killed, there was no chance for him to become the Lord. However, the result from the siege was that Ark was the Lord. At that time, there were still 8 guild masters from the Hermes Alliance and Dawn Blade coalition left.

No matter how Ho Myung-hwan looked at the situation, there was no way to make sense of the result. What on earth happened in the siege? However he only had the information posted in the Shrine of War. He also couldn't find any videos related to the siege. The siege could only be shown on TV if the Lord allowed it. On the other hand, Alan had kept the siege completely confidential.

'We still don't know what happened.....'

He wasn't the only one who would be interested in this. Ho Myung-hwan organized the materials and immediately visited the Planning Department's chief Ha Myung-woo. He thought that Ark would definitely be excluded from the eliminated contestants list. However, Ha Myung-woo's response was not impressed.

"Ark? I've never heard of that ID."

"Yes, he was one of the candidates put on the eliminated list."

"So?"

"So what? An eliminated contestant has managed to push back Alan, who is a part of the highest ranked group.....No, he also managed to beat the pioneers in the Hermes guild and occupied the throne. If the results are to this degree, don't we have to start paying attention to Ark as a candidate again?"

"Can I see the data again?"

Ha Myung-woo scanned the data and laughed.

"The candidate Ark only had 83 people in his raid party. Do you think he really defeated the Hermes guild and Alan with that number?"

"Yes? But the results....."

"I think there are two ways that could've happened. He got lucky or the Hermes guild leader put him on the throne for some other purpose. Both reasons have nothing to do with his ability. I'm not interested in lucky candidates. I only pick candidates with skill."

"Then.....?"

"But it is still necessary to look at it once. When does the report come in this month?"

"There is still one week left."

"Okay, that is when the next siege has started. I'll call the reference room and tell them to send me Ark's report for this month. I'll look carefully at how he performed during the siege. But if he performed weakly then his evaluation won't change. Ark is still eliminated. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

Ho Myung-hwan withdrew with a disappointed face. In fact, he also didn't think that Ark became the Lord with real skills. Just like Ha Myung-woo, he also thought that Ark obtained the castle due to luck.

'Ark.....You performed well in the Evil Silrion. You have a lot of experiences against various users in New World. But is it really possible for you to become the Lord with only 83 people? How will you defend Silvana in the future?'

Ark's last report came 3 weeks ago.....so he didn't understand that Ark's group consisted of NPCs. So he could not imagine Ark participating a lot in the siege. He also had to protect Silvana. All those answers would be recorded in the next report.

'Can Ark really defend his territory? The next submission deadline is in one week.....it is crazy.'

Ho Myung-hwan pulled out a cigarette with a pained face. It was the first time that he couldn't wait to read the contents of a report.

Now Kang Mi-su at the reception desk.....if he visited then he would be able to hear from Lariette how the siege went. But Ho Myung-hwan shook his head.

'I don't need half of the information. Yes, there is also some pleasure in waiting.'

He would prefer to read the contents directly from Ark's viewpoint. That was the wish of Ho Myung-hwan who considered himself a 'secret fan of Ark.'

## Act 3: Secrets of Silvana Castle

“Ha.....”

Ark sighed with a pained expression. It was because of a NPC named Berami. After the siege ended and he got a good night's sleep, he connected to an office in Silvana. It was a luxurious office overlooking his estate! It was the first time Ark realized that the estate was his. After all the suffering he was able to sit down and relax in a comfortable chair. He became thrilled at the thought of being a Lord. Then while he was in a good mood, a middle-aged NPC knocked and entered.

“I am the Lord's advisor, Berami.”

Berami's role was estate management, legal advice, financial management and so on.....while he was old-fashioned about military affairs, his financial style was modern. A user who came to power overnight wouldn't be equipped with the knowledge to handle the castle and its estate. So an NPC who specialized in estate management was provided. From the beginning Ark didn't really like Berami. And unfortunately his intuition didn't lead him astray.

“Do you like the office?”

“Hmm, it's not bad.”

Ark deliberately answered in a haughty tone. Berami pushed his glasses with his fingers and smiled.

“I'm glad you like it. You were brilliant in the siege but the castle is a mess. This was the only decent place. Well, enough about that.....according to their Majesties' law, the rights of the Lord have been transferred to Ark-nim. Congratulations. I hope you last for a while.”

The civil servant spoke in an official tone. Although there was a slight sense of sarcasm.....he was still a civil servant NPC. But Ark's pleasant dream soon turned into a nightmare because of his words.

“The most important thing I have to explain is about financial management.”

“That's right!”

Ark strained his ears and concentrated. It was the part that Ark was most curious about. He went through a lot of struggles before occupying the castle. So how much profit would he get from it? Berami's explanation continued.

"The income for Silvana is earned from the import of alcohol, customs, various taxes and businesses in the territory.....so one month is 150,000 gold."

'150,000 Gold!'

Ark's mouth dropped at the astronomical amount. That was worth 15 billion won in reality! It was more money than he's seen in his life.....no, he couldn't even imagine that much money. Of course, since it was the castle's income he might not earn that much as an individual. However he also had to apply medieval economics to New World.

'As the Lord, am I free to spend 150,000 gold however I like?'

His heart rate sped up and his breathing became rough at the thought! Was this what winning the lottery feels like?

However.....Ark's happiness got water poured on it.

"Now I'll explain the amount to be spent. The most important thing is that you have to pay a tax to the royal family of the Three Kingdoms. That's 10% of the monthly revenue, so 30% is 45,000 gold."

45,000 gold instantly flew away.

Ark felt like he was hearing a scam but he made himself calm down.

'I-it's okay. There's still 105,000 gold.....'

However Berami cruelly continued talking.

"By default, you should use the rest of the 105,000 gold for estate management. Now, I will tell you the things that need to be done based on priority. The most urgent thing is to repair the Defense Towers and castle walls that were destroyed in the siege. This is important as a Lord. Then.....ha, it was neatly smashed. Repairing it should cost roughly 47,000 gold."

Berami shook his head as if he was irritated. However, Ark felt more like crying. He struggled so hard to destroy it and now he had to use his money to repair it!

"Then there is the monthly salary for the estate's employees. The costs for hiring soldiers and servants is 17,000 gold. The donation to the Shrine of War is 4,000 gold. The maintenance of various infrastructure on the estate is 10,000 gold. And the castle development fund....."

"S-stop!"

Ark shouted with fright.

“What the hell is with all that money?”

Berami retorted with a scornful look.

“Did you think the estate is maintained for free? The items I mentioned are just summaries. I will go into more details in the following days. But as the Lord you don’t have to be concerned. I will handle most of it and you will still receive a small salary.”

“Then I can use that money anyway I like?”

“Didn’t you know?”

Berami asked with surprise.

“Although the kings from the Three Kingdoms authorized you to become a Lord, your actions are still limited. You can only use the proceeds from the castle for castle related business. As the Lord, you’ll receive 2% of the total revenue of 150,000 gold. That is 3000 gold.”

In the end the salary for a Lord in Nagaran wasn’t that different from a president. Of course, 3000 gold was still a large amount. However, he had to consider the vast amount of money that was needed for a siege. And only receiving 3000 gold from 150,000? He had a sinking feeling.....

“Honestly, at present Silvana is in a deficit. Because Sir Alan who was the previous Lord started a lot of construction projects. He invested a lot in the estate. Well, if the facilities were completed then the income for the Lord would increase.”

After hearing Berami’s explanation, Ark’s idea of having a castle changed. He had thought that he could get profit just from occupying the castle. But it was a big mistake. New World’s system and its NPCs weren’t so easy. All his funds from the territory were tied to the estate thanks to the law. In other words, he had to invest most of the money into development of the estate. Of course, the Lord would be able to get a profit in the long term.

Currently Silvana was a D class estate. Once it develops to a C class then the proceeds would double. The Lord’s income would also increase by 2, making it 6000 gold.....so if he developed it to an A class estate then he would get a monthly income of 12,000 gold. Since one month is 10 days in reality, that was 36000 gold every month! It was an absurd income! But it would take a few years and there was no guarantee that he could defend the castle for that long.

‘Realistically, it would take 1~2 game years to raise the rating of the castle by that much. In reality that is half a year.’ If I fail to defend the castle in the meantime then it won’t be very good. In addition, I also have to consider the money involved in a siege.....’

The Lord’s monthly salary of 3,000 gold was not that much. Ark now understood Alan’s feelings. Since he couldn’t use most of the money, Alan couldn’t afford to waste the 3000 gold on a siege. A ghost guild was made to reduce the cost of a siege as much as possible. And because the Defense Towers and walls weren’t destroyed, he could rush the estate’s development. Ark once again realised the uselessness of war.

‘Anyway, it is impossible for me.’

The cost of repairs, food, various potions and hiring mercenaries..... If he participated in a war again then it would cost several thousand gold. Well, in the last one the money came from the Hermes guild but he still wasted 600 gold on food, cannon production and so on.

He also only used 83 people. But if he was a Lord then he needed more money and troops for a war. Since Alan had occupied the castle until now, it was clear that he suffered a huge financial loss.

‘Since I was never that greedy about it, I can just collect the 3000 gold and leave.’

That was what he first thought when he heard about it. But the cunning of the Three Kings immediately appeared. Instead of being paid beforehand, the Lord’s salary was paid afterwards. If it was like that.....then he would receive the salary one month after he became Lord. A month was 10 days in reality. He would have to be victorious in the sieges that were held once a week in order to receive the salary! If the Lordship changes then he would receive nothing. It was a brilliant law.

‘Isn’t this like the kings are professional conmen?’

Ark became gloomy. With the siege next week, he had no confidence about keeping the castle. Of course, as the Lord he might be able to attract allies. However, Ark had no funds to hold a siege. Who was help a Lord who couldn’t even buy potions? They would rather help the other side to take over the castle.

‘If I scrape money together then I might be able to hire some mercenaries.....’

He would be driven penniless by that kind of money. With no money Ark was powerless to keep the castle.

‘But the land is too good to just give up. Just like me, Raiden or Haiyan from Grey Wings wouldn’t have known anything about the estate. But Silvana’s geographical position means that its development potential is immense. When Nagaran becomes stable, I can develop it to C or even B class. Then the income from the castle would be unthinkable.’

If it was like that then money wouldn’t be a problem. With the huge funds, organizing an army of 10,000 people wouldn’t be a dream.

‘But despite the castle, I can’t even ask for 1 copper.....I would rather Raiden become the Lord like originally planned.’

Ark felt resentful towards Raiden. If Raiden had just followed the agreement then he wouldn’t have to worry about this. The value of 100 Intermediate Recovery Potions was 2000 gold. Catapult repair costs 1000 gold. Renovation and labour costs for the raccoons 600 gold. In total it would’ve been 3,600 gold!

That was more than the Lord’s monthly salary. However, Raiden’s betrayal meant he didn’t get a penny of it and the only thing he received was the castle.

‘I really don’t have any luck.....’

Ark kept on sighing. But Berami acted like Ark’s feelings didn’t matter. He extended a thick document.

“Then please settle the payment for the estate management immediately.”

“Please come back later!”

After Ark angrily raised his voice, Berami shrugged and left the office. His attitude clearly showed that he opposed the appointment of the new Lord. After he was alone, Ark organized his thoughts for a bit. Ark quickly gave up. At the thought of dying and losing his money, he easily gave up.

‘It is impossible for me to control the castle next week. So I’ll put that problem aside for the moment.....while I’m the Lord I’ll do what I can. Alan used his power as a Lord to imprison Sid in the dungeon.’

It was the objective he had to achieve first.

‘But it might be insufficient. Alan is closely related to the Cathedral. It is to the extent that the Cathedral secretly dispatched the Holy Knights. Alan also disturbed Sid because of his grudge. This has become troublesome.....’

Ark thought of something and nodded.

‘That’s it. It is the reason why the Lord of Jackson hesitated to help me. There is the rule that regular soldiers can’t interfere in Nagaran. That also applies to the knights from the Cathedral. If I find proof that the Cathedral secretly helped Alan then it is possible to strike a blow to them.’

Once the Cathedral is shaken then it wouldn’t be difficult to extract Sid. Once Ark determined his task, he immediately began to explore the castle. 20 knights were kept in the castle so they should’ve left a trail somewhere. And he found the trail without any difficulty. No, it was just left in the open.

“What is this?”

Ark muttered with a foolish face. Inside the castle a luxurious building had been set up. The building had an atmosphere like a temple and was locked when he pushed the doors.

“Ah, that is the Asyeosu Temple.”

“Asyeosu?”

Berami explained the history after Ark visited him.

“Yes, the goddess of balance. But it is mostly called the Cathedral because it is the most influential of the 12 religions on the continent. The church of Asyeosu was revived 100 years ago. The former lord Sir Alan is a devout believer. According to what I heard, the church helped Sir Alan a lot when he was undergoing the ordeals to be recognized as a Holy Knight.”

“Then this temple.....?”

“Originally it just contained an old statue of Asyeosu. After Sir Alan became the Lord, he invested a lot of money into building the temple.”

Ark began to feel suspicious after Berami’s words. A guy like Alan wouldn’t invest money in a temple for no reason.

‘Maybe he had to build a temple in order to receive the church’s help. If the temple was built then the church would send NPCs for free. But.....it weighs heavily on my mind. Would he really waste all that money building a temple in the castle just for some helpers?’

Just as Ark was thinking this.

“Apart from Alan, everyone in Dawn Blade was a devout believer.”

“What?”

“After Sir Alan built the temple, all of the Dawn Blade coalition lived in the temple. They would not leave the temple even after spending three days and three nights there.”

“What were they doing in there?”

“I don’t know. Sir Alan’s commands prevented other people from coming near there. Well, wasn’t it to keep a vigil all night? They were always tired after leaving.”

Berami answered in a disinterested tone. And Ark suddenly saw a flash.

Three days and nights praying in the temple? Once the users connected they would spend hours stuck in the temple. In addition, Alan did it as well.....No, it was impossible for him to be that devoted to Asyeosu. Even if the religion gave him all sorts of benefits, it was difficult to transfer those benefits to reality. There was no reason to believe in a fake religion in a game. Since he built the temple and wouldn’t leave it, there was definitely something hidden.

‘If I want to find a link between Alan and the Cathedral then it would be here!’

“Can I enter there?”

“Of course. Because everything in the castle is the Lord’s possessions.”

It was the first time Berami said something great. While he couldn’t receive the Lord’s salary yet, he was the Lord of the castle.

“But it was locked?”

“My Lord should go to your office safe. The keys to all the facilities are kept there. But my Lord is prohibited from carrying the key outside the estate. Since the title of Lord was released, the key should be housed there.”

Ark headed straight to find the temple key.

Clatter, creak.....

After he inserted the key the door opened with a massive sound. The interior wasn’t that different from other cathedrals. There were long chairs lined up inside with a slightly higher platform at the front.

‘What the hell? It’s not hiding anything? Then what were they doing in here?’

He really spent his fortune just to pray to the gods here? Ark looked around until he suddenly became puzzled.

‘Wait. Isn’t something strange?’

Ark stood in the centre of the temple and looked around. Berami said that the Dawn Blade coalition stayed here for three days. It was a coalition not one guild. In numerical terms it comprised of 1,700 people. However the temple wasn’t big enough for all those people. Even the commuter buses could only cram in a few hundred people at 7 in the morning. Then where did the remaining people go?

‘Are there any other exits?’

Ark searched every corner but nothing caught his eye. After a few minutes.....he was searching the platform when he saw small letters engraved on the bottom.

Turn your head and bring back the darkness.

‘What does that mean?’

Ark looked around the area with a dubious expression. However Ark had quite a lot of experience in solving puzzles in New World. Once he knew the location of the statue of Asyeosu, Ark was able to understand the phrase. Since breakfast had just finished, the morning sun was coming from all directions through the transparent windows. The light was concentrated on the statue’s right side. In other words, he had to turn the statue away from the east. One of the unshakeable laws was that the sun always rose in the East! He had to turn the statue to the darkness, which meant to the west.

‘Then.....’

Ark insolently grabbed the statue’s face and turned it. The face turned around just like he expected. When he let go a mechanical whirring sound was heard. The platform was pushed to one side, revealing a long staircase leading into darkness.

‘It is a secret passage! The Dawn Blade members went in here!’

There was no need to think. Ark used Eyes of the Cat and descended the stairs.

‘Where do these stairs lead to?’

The stairs were longer than expected. It twisted into a spiral staircase that seemed to lead to hell. How far did he go? He suddenly felt a cool spirit on his skin. It wasn't simply a feeling of the temperature going down. It was like cold slippery tentacles were gripping his body. An unidentified fear crept into his mind.

"What the? Why does it feel so unpleasant?"

Ark murmured in an uncomfortable voice. The stairs ended and a huge cave appeared.

### The Cradle of an Ancient Evil (Special)

You have discovered a cave with a cold chill that makes even the soul tremble. You've heard the groaning of a mysterious ghost deep inside the intricate maze-like cave. And the more powerful and evil spirit as it grabbed them. The bloody history of this cave isn't as simple as you think. No doubt huge and sinister secrets are hidden. If you are wise then you should never enter alone.

"Dungeon?"

Ark looked at the information window with stunned eyes. There was a hunting ground underneath the castle? He didn't understand but it would obviously be filled with monsters. After he read the description he knew it wasn't a low level dungeon.

'But I can't possibly go back empty-handed. Although my dark attribute bonus will be supplied, I have no information about the dungeon so I have to be prepared.'

Ark took out his pot and made a survival cooking dish. To raise health he made the 'Abundant Stew,' 'Grilled Smoke Bison' to increase strength and agility, 'Shellfish Salad' to boost defense and so on.....after doting Dedric and Deimos, he entered the dungeon.

"Dedric, scout the area. Deimos, stay right beside me."

"Ugh, I feel like this is a bad cave."

Clack clack clack clack.....clack clack.....

Even Dedric and Deimos began to feel nervous about the sinister aura. However, unlike his worries he didn't encounter any monsters.

'Indeed, since Alan and those guys came in here many times then of course they would sweep all the monsters. I don't know how large the cave is or where the remaining monsters are.'

Then Ark heard something while he was thinking.

"M-Master! There it is!"

Dedric flew back all flustered. A pair of red eyes abruptly appeared behind Dedric. White fangs appeared underneath the eyes while a horrible stench was coming off it.

Grrrrr!

'Monster!'

Kaaaak!

The monster quickly rushed towards him. Ark reflexively avoided the club by throwing his body towards the ground. The whole cave shook with a tremendous roar. The incredible force even crushed the rocks! Ark got up after dodging the attack and glared at the monster. Thanks to Eyes of the Cat, the monster's information floated in the darkness above its head. After verifying the information, Ark's face turned white and terrified.

"Huk, what is with that guy.....?"

Its massive body filled the passage! The upper part was human which the lower body had a goat's legs. The face also looked like a black goat, with three thick horns spiralling up from the forehead. It was the shape of a devil that was often portrayed in ancient religions! However Ark wasn't appalled by its appearance. The monster's name was the Ancient Evil Goat. If he changed it to Hangul then it could be interpreted as bad goat. No, now was not the time to joke. The Ancient Evil Goat was level 300! The name displayed had a red star engraved next to it.

'Red star.....Elite monster!'

Ark's spirit was stunned. Elite monsters gave several times more experience and items than general monsters. It was also many times stronger than general monsters. It wasn't just a level 300 monster.

Kkuaaaa!

The Goat swung its club and confronted him. Ark avoided the first attack but got trapped in a corner! Ark lifted his sword and blocked the club. No, he tried to but the power in the club exceeded Ark's imagination.

Kwajajak. The impact forced Ark into the wall and crushed some bones.

-You've received a critical hit regardless of your block.

640 damage received. Thanks to the intense block that shook your head, you have become stunned for 5 seconds.

'Oh my God!'

Even if it was a critical hit, to do 640 damage with one blow.....

The problem was not only the damage. His spirit became stunned. His body felt like cotton every time he tried to move it. Meanwhile, Goat ran wildly and lifted its club.

Clack clack clack!

Then Deimos appeared behind Goat yelling (?) wildly. The damage caused Goat's club to be pushed to the side but it still glanced Ark's shoulder. Then Dedric also entered Goat's line of sight and distracted him. But the look on Dedric's face wasn't one normally seen there.

"H-here. Hey! M-Master, is it still far away? This bastard.....unbelievably fast!"

Goat's speed did not match its huge body. Eventually Dedric was hit in the back of the head by the angrily pursuing Goat.

Backstab damage! Dedric's defense was low so he instantly lost 50% of his health and was thrown to the ground. Goat let out a puff of hot air and lifted his foot.

"Ugh, ugh, ugh! Help!"

Clack clack clack!

Deimos appeared in front of Dedric and blocked with his shield. Goat kept on hitting his club like it was a hammer. Deimos used his shield to block but his health was still decreased by 20%. However Deimos didn't retreat, he just stepped forward and swung his sword at Goat. Since Ark and Dedric were unable to act, Deimos judged that he was the only person (?) available.

"Deimos! You are actually a nice guy! Okay, that's it!"

Dedric was rooting for Deimos with an impressed face. However, Goat wasn't something that he could face with just courage.

Thump, thump, snap! Every time there was an explosive sound, Deimos' health would decrease. And he fell into a critical condition in just a few seconds. After Deimos stumbled, Dedric immediately raised his voice angrily.

"Ya, you! Are you just going to die like that? Hold on for more than 3 seconds before dying!"

Yes, that bat was truly a shameless person. Goat was just about to strike the final blow when.....

"Blade Storm!"

Numerous particles of light appeared inside the cave and started to strike Goat. The sword debris continuously attacked it and Goat was pushed back a few metres. Dedric shouted with glee.

"Master, you got up! Help me!"

However Ark couldn't even afford to answer.

'Oh my God.....!'

He naturally moaned. The sword that Snake spat out was a pretty good sword. He could've got several gold for it even though it wasn't a magic sword. Even though he used Blade Storm, he only managed to chip off 7% of its health. It almost had the stamina of a boss.

'In addition, the cave is pretty narrow. With the huge figure, there is no room for me to escape.'

The narrow area was a disadvantage for Ark.

'But there is a way. It is dangerous.....'

"Deimos, transform!"

Deimos who was burning with a fighting spirit changed at Ark's command. Ark drew the sword and shouted.

"Dedric, can you move now?"

"Okay! Although I can move a little bit, with that Goat as the opponent....."

"If you see any other monsters while flying let me know right away."

"If you like. Are you going to run away?"

"Too noisy! Just do it!"

When Ark raised his voice, Dedric immediately flew to the nearest passage. When Dedric ran away, Goat shrieked and followed.

"You goat bastard, your opponent is me!"

Ark struck Goat with his whip like blade. Then Goat turned and charged towards him. Ark ran away and attacked a few times while he ran down the passage that Dedric flew in. It was the plan that Ark had come up with.

The range of the whip blade was 10 metres. Thus he could attack with the whip from a distance until Goat got close. Of course, if he used the whip then the damage was only 70% of the Saw Blade. But clothes would get wet even when it is a light shower. Although it might take some time but it would eventually run out of health.

It was a hit and run strategy! It was an operation he often used when his health was low.

Kwaaaaa!

However, Goat was much faster than Ark expected. Although it was 20 metres away, Goat quickly cross the distance and swung its club.

"Huck, sprint!"

Ark hurriedly screamed. His body became as light as a feather and he quickly got some distance between him and Goat.

'This is surprisingly useable?'

Ark had learnt 'Sprint' from Lancel Village and he never imagined that it would be so useful. When he used Sprint his movement speed increased by 50%. Although it only lasted a few seconds, the effect was still enough for his plan to work. Ark alternated using Sprint and the whip attack and gradually decreased Goat's health. However his plan had one risk factor. If he encountered or aggravated other monsters while attacking then the situation would become even worse. It was the reason why Ark urgently sent Dedric to scout ahead.

"There's a monster in the right passage! It is another Goat!"

“Huk, there are two goats here. The other side, the other side!”

The Cradle of Ancient Evil was truly a dungeon where he couldn't be careless. There were boss level goats everywhere. Thanks to Dedric's reconnaissance, he was able to slowly kill Goat without running into another one.

It had been 40 minutes since the battle started.....Goat's health dropped to 10% but Ark never rushed it. If Goat managed to land one blow on him then all of his 40 minute efforts would be undone. Ark slowly attacked until.....finally there was only 1% health left.

“Now it is time to finish this!”

Chwarararak, Kakakakak!

Ark turned around and brandished the Saw Blade.

Roaaaaar!

Goat was struck with a critical hit and collapsed with a scream.

“Huk huk huk, I killed it.”

Ark sat on the ground with a heavy thud. When he checked the information window, he saw that he only had 30 mana left. Thanks to using Sprint which consumed 20 mana, his mana was low. He also got hit three or four times so he only had 1,500 health left. Ark's current level was 159. With his dark attribute bonus it was 222. Nevertheless, he would not be able to win against that opponent in a head on confrontation. However, the experience was equivalent to the difficulty level.

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.

It was indeed an elite Monster! He quickly gained 2 levels. Also.....

Ssak ssaak ssak!

Snake immediately showed Ark the item it found.

Heavy Chain Gloves (Magic)

Armour type: Chain Gloves

Defense power: 65

Durability: 13/50

Weight: 50

User restriction: Level 150 and more.

These gloves are made of tightly connected small chains. Since it is old, the weight is a little difficult. But it does not look worn at all. It seems to be made out of a hard magic material.

<Option: Strength +20, Stamina +15>

‘A magic item dropped from a monster I encountered for the first time.....!’

A tremendous amount of experience and a magic item!

‘Now I see.’

Ark had questioned something during the siege. Raiden had said they haven’t left the castle since they occupied it, yet the Dawn Blade members had become stronger. In fact, they actually never left the castle. The answer was because of this dungeon. If they monopolized and hunted in a dungeon filled with elite monsters then of course they would become stronger.

‘If I can monopolize the dungeon then its value will become immense. But how did Alan even find this place? And how big is it? While I was running away a while ago, I saw some stairs leading down.....this dungeon has even more secrets.’

Ark contemplated before deciding to explore a bit more. Of course he had no intention of fighting a Goat again. He could barely deal with one. If he encountered two or more of them then he wouldn’t be able to handle it with his ability now. Ark recalled his summons and used stealth.

As expected, he soon saw groups of two or three goats. A level 350 elite monster that resembled a devil also appeared regularly.

‘This isn’t going to work. I don’t know the detection abilities of those monsters so I won’t be able to approach. I’ll leave before stealth wears off and return with the hyungs.’

It was the first time he felt like the darkness was terrifying in New World. Ark headed towards the entrance of the dungeon. Then, a horrible smell suddenly came from another passage.

‘What, what the? This smell? Is this?’

Ark instinctively turned his head and winced. The bad stench came from a place with another Asyeosu statue. In the temple the statue didn’t seem that strange. Was it because of the darkness? It somehow had an even more eerie feel. Not only that. The landscape expanded into a place that looked like a meeting place for a devil worshipping cult.

No, it actually was that place. There were ritualistic instruments, bones and rotten corpses lying around the area. It felt like the set of a horror movie.

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak!

He glanced around to see Snake scratching at something in the ground. After 3~4 minutes, a shiny object was pulled out.

‘Eh? That is.....?’

It was the size of a fist and made out of a crystal-like material that he had previously seen in the Underwater City. Thanks to that, Ark knew the purpose of the item. It was a memory crystal often found in ancient ruins. During the Dark Century, any texts or images were retained in the memory crystal instead of books. Unfortunately, that ancient knowledge had disappeared and was now thought of as simple stones.....But Ark was different, as he had a Dark Walker’s Knowledge of Ancient Relics.

Of course .....when he picked up the crystal, an image floated in front of him. It wasn’t a beautiful scene like the ones he saw in the Underwater City. The blurry images that looked like an old scene showed the area where Ark was standing now. People dressed in black were gathered. They chanted an unknown spell towards Asyeosu’s statue. When the atmosphere became heightened, they pulled in a group of naked people. The naked people were stricken with terror. There was a barrage of screams.

However, the people dressed in black smiled and flocked to them like wild animals seeking their prey. A bizarre twisted sword tore their flesh off and into their bones. Every strike made a ringing sound and echoed. At the end, the blood of the sacrifices were scattered all over Asyeosu’s statue. Then Asyeosu’s face distorted. As if it was alive, the entire face distorted and emerged with an entirely different shape. It was

the face of a crow with red eyes! There was a loud thunder like cry that shook the eardrums.

Worship the Great Asyeosu!

Asyeosu has the appearance of Ankh, god of the dead! It changes from balance to destruction! Blood is a symbol of destruction! That is why we offer blood to Asyeosu. To destroy the balance.

Your Knowledge of Ancient Ruins has shown you the information hidden in the 'Memory Crystal.'

The Memory Crystal contained the secret history of the ancient society that worshipped the Devil. The true identity of the god worshipped by the masked figures is hidden in ancient writing.

<Knowledge of Ancient Relics +25, Intelligence 20, Luck 10, Fame has increased by 200>

The Memory Crystal shattered into dust. At that moment, it was like a thunderbolt had struck his head.

'All the questions in my head are answered!'

It was the reason why the Cathedral helped Alan by sending Holy Knights! The identity of the Asyeosu church was one that secretly worshipped the devil. And their birthplace was here, hidden in the basement of Silvana Castle. That's why they wanted to control Nagaran, in order to keep this place secret. But the war suddenly finished and it was opened to users.

There was no time to dispose of the things left in this dungeon. The NPCs also knows that users have a lot of curiosity. Once they occupied Silvana then it was only a matter of time until someone discovered it. If the Lord kept on changing, there was a chance that someone with the Knowledge of Ancient Relics might become the Lord. Because of that, they tried to have foreigners who worshipped Asyeosu seal up the secret.

'That is why Alan got approval to use the Holy Knights!'

It was the reason why Alan aimed for Silvana among the 12 castles. In exchange for the church's help, he promised to keep Silvana's secret hidden. And they told Alan the secret of the platform in exchange.

'Yes, the temple was built in exchange for the Holy Knights.....they were dispatched to help Alan and to also keep the secret. If they had an opportunity then they would probably get rid of the evidence. But since it is a large and complex dungeon, they probably couldn't find it.'

The memory crystal was buried in the ground and would be hard for users to find. At that moment, Ark's head was spinning fiercely.

'Anyway, it is difficult to go against the church. On the other hand, I already know the secret between Alan and the Cathedral. If Alan recovers, the Asyeosu church will help him retake it again and that would be an obstacle. Then.....!'

He had no choice but to discard all answers except for one! And he had plenty of bombs to throw at them. The pieces of the Memory Crystal was scattered around!

'Huhuhu, Alan, you're done for now!'

#### **Act 4: See you again, Silvana!**

Crack!

The door broke off with a harsh sound. Several knights and soldiers suddenly came through the door. The priest who was praying got up with a surprised expression.

"What are you doing? Don't you know where this is?"

"Shut up!"

The knights glanced at the soldiers and pushed the priest outside. The soldiers held up a bucket with a strange smell and poured it on the statue. The statue's face instantly changed into that of a crow.

"Ankh, the god of death!"

The knight exclaimed and pulled out his sword.

"There is no need to look anymore. Capture all the wicked ones! If they become rebellious then kill them!"

A continuous uproar took place. The priests began to resist, forcing the soldiers to draw their swords and a messy fight suddenly occurred. It wasn't limited to that

room. Throughout the cathedral, the same scene was occurring at the temples that worshipped Asyeosu. However, in this situation the soldiers had already completely surrounded the temple. The priests soon gave up their resistance and the soldiers bound them.

"This room belongs to Asyeosu's Archbishop!"

The soldiers who were clearing the top floor of the temple plunged into the room. However, the Archbishop was not in the room. He had sensed the commotion and fled.

"Damn.....he couldn't have been able to run far away. Send soldiers to every exit and block his escape!"

"I understand!"

The soldiers ran away in a hurry. Soldiers from the Schudenberg Kingdom were raiding Asyeosu's temple! They found a secret meeting place to worship Ankh inside the cathedral. After searching and seizing documents, they found irregularities with the church of Asyeosu. Unfortunately, the Archbishop and several senior priests had fled beforehand but the church of Asyeosu was still destroyed. Taking into consideration the impact on the kingdom, they did not disclose any further details. Thus the church of Asyeosu quietly disappeared into the depths of the history books, while a hobbit merchant who was imprisoned for life in the cathedral dungeons was released.

"Uh, my sore eyes.....!"

The hobbit frowned at the painful sunlight. It was none other than Sid who had spent a month in jail.

"I wonder why I was released?"

Sid didn't know what had changed. His day in the prison had begun like normal until a soldier suddenly approached and asked.

"Are you Sid?"

"Yes? Yes I am, but why?"

"You've been released from prison."

The soldiers just released Sid without any notice. He didn't know what happened today but Sid didn't bother questioning it.

“Anyway, I can now play the game again. I’ll never come near the Cathedral again!”

Sid quickly left the tedious Cathedral. But a few minutes after Sid had gained precious freedom, his face darkened. It was because he had found a letter from Ark in his mailbox.

Have you left? Please come to Silvana castle in Nagaran immediately!

Although I managed to get the confiscated 5000 gold back, there is no way to obtain the 3000 gold that you lost to a scam. In such a situation Ark had no intention of letting his food go. The poor hobbit had once again gone from the mouth of a tiger into the wolf’s trap.

‘Since the letter is written by Ark-nim.....it is impossible not to go.....’

Sid sighed and headed towards Nagaran.

‘How did my gaming life become like this?’

.....The King congratulated him after listening to the situation. But there were still remnants of the social party. The church of Asyeosu had gathered a lot of social power, so if it was discredited then confusion would spread throughout the continent. So he had to wait for the King’s permission to disclose the secret. Once the political situation calmed down then he would have a chance.

‘Huhuhu, okay, Alan and the Cathedral have been dealt with.’

There was a sudden warm smile on Hyun-woo’s mouth. Yes, it wasn’t necessary to explain once again but Ark was behind the church’s downfall. Ark collected the fragments of memory crystal from the dungeon and headed straight to the young Lord of Jackson. He relayed what he found with the memory crystals as evidence. After that it progressed rapidly. The young Lord realised the severity of the problem, the King mobilized his troops and Asyeosu’s temple was raided. Of course, Asyeosu’s destruction was unrelated to Alan and Sid. However, Ark had gained a lot of recognition from the situation and Sid was released from the prison based on his words. Well Sid was imprisoned for an ambiguous reason by the church of Asyeosu in the first place, so he was released once the charges were

reviewed.....But what made Ark even more cheerful was the situation surrounding Alan.

The Pope had sent him a report from the King.

Judging from the circumstances, I think that there is a secret deal between Alan and the Asyeosu church in regards to Sid like you claimed. The information the knights confiscated from the temple is the proof. Alan clearly knew the truth behind the church and hid it. Unfortunately, there is no way to prove that he had anything to do with what happened to Sid. But he can't escape the charge of conspiring with the church. Arrangements have been made for Alan's downfall. Because I have to conceal the contents, the public charge will be that he made a ghost guild in Nagaran and deceived the Kings of the Three Kingdoms. Once he is caught then there will be a big punishment.

'Now he doesn't have a chance.'

The crime of socializing with the church was hidden. Instead his sin was deceiving the kings using a ghost guild. Thanks to that, overnight Alan went from being a Lord to a fugitive. The guild master was accused of a crime so the Dawn Blade guild was also dissolved. Alan had lost all his power and his entire support base. But was that all? Since he was a wanted man then he couldn't even hunt properly. If it was to this degree then Alan was already over. In addition, the same thing applied to Andel who relied on Alan.

'You shouldn't have picked a fight with me.'

Ark felt refreshed at the thought of their downfall. But it was only the start. Ark's motto was to step on them again and again until they became trash.

'Even though the conclusion is that I won, Alan still has my 3000 gold. I won't be pleased if it ends like this. Since his crime was stealing my money, using Lariette and killing Roco, I won't be pleased until I kill him at least three or four times!'

Once he made up his mind, Ark was more persistent than anyone else.

"We have the same thoughts. We won't be satisfied with this."

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members nodded.

"Park So-mi's medical expenses.....urgh, the resentment of 3000 gold is deep!"

"How dare he kill our cutie Roco right in front of us.....!"

"That's not the problem. Alan used a woman as a shield.....! I have to make sure such a person doesn't step foot into New World again."

Roco growled fiercely. Ark who had been listening in silence finally said.

"The problem is that there is no way to figure out Alan's location. When Alan was the Lord the castle was his resurrection point. Since we've captured the castle, he will resurrect in the location before the castle. But we can't just go out and search the 1~2 villages in the vicinity. And Alan probably won't travel like he did before."

"The time has come to show my skill."

At that time, Hae Gyeol-sa smiled and cut in.

"Don't you know I'm a professional at finding people?"

Hae Gyeol-sa.....In other words, his former job was recovering money from people. Thus he was an expert at finding people who hid with the money.

"But isn't this a game?"

"The method to find people doesn't actually change. Everyone has similar habits in regards to hiding. If I go out and search the vicinity then I'll quickly be able to catch his trail."

Hae Gyeol-sa replied. Ark had already seen Jjak-tung's and Tazza's skills a while ago. Hae Gyeol-sa would only tell him that if there was a good reason.

"It will be difficult alone.....if I had a few people then I could find Alan within a couple of days."

"I'd go. Because I have no interest in levelling up."

"It might be too dangerous with just you."

Tazza and Bul-kkun volunteered.

"Okay let's start straight away. Send any information about Alan to my mail."

So Hae Gyeol-sa, Tazza, and Bul-kkun left to track Alan.

'Now I just have to wait.'

Once Ark organized that he turned his attention to the problem of Silvana castle. There was no way that Ark could defend Silvana with his power. He had no

money or organizing ability to create a ghost guild like Alan did. When the next siege began there was a 100% chance that he would have his Lordship taken away. At best he would only receive 1 copper from being the Lord before being kicked out. But Ark had already found a way to solve the problem.

"For the moment, I'm going to transfer this castle to Raiden."

"What?"

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members' eyes opened.

"W-what are you talking about?"

"Why are you handing the castle over to the guy who betrayed us?"

"Of course it's not for free."

Ark shook his finger left and right as he laughed.

"As you know, we don't have a way to keep the castle. But we have the right to choose a challenger. I'll sell that right to Raiden. Since he'll definitely obtain the castle once he gets the challenge right, there is no way Raiden would refuse."

"Certainly but....."

"Giving a castle that we worked hard to capture to a guy like him....."

"Didn't you hear? I said for the moment."

"Huh? For the moment?"

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members were puzzled. Ark smiled and explained in detail what he had envisioned. And JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members expressed their admiration.

"That, that method.....!"

"Now do you understand? Silvana isn't like that now, but in the future it will be a goose that lays golden eggs. It isn't possible to overlook such a place. So I'm going to install a few precautions before I pass it to Raiden. And since I developed the idea, I want Hyungs to make it possible."

"I got it. Leave it to us."

The rehabilitation members rolled up their sleeves with excited faces. JusticeMan nodded and looked at Ark with admiring eyes.

"I see why you picked Raiden to make the deal with."

"I have to return the favour at least once."

Ark replied with an evil grin. Although he had to deal with Alan, there was still a debt that Raiden needed to repay. A few hours later, Ark sat facing Raiden in his office. Raiden's face was haggard since he couldn't sleep after the siege. Indeed, on the way here Raiden vomited on the road which Ark noticed and couldn't help making insinuations while smiling.

"What happened to your pretty face?"

"You bastard.....!"

Raiden drew his sword as his shoulders shook with anger. Well, if he tried to kill him then the NPC soldiers would expel him like a dog..... Ark seemed carefree as he said.

"In this situation there is no reason to be angry with me."

"Did you call me just to say things like that?"

"No, I called because I have a good proposal."

"What? Proposal?"

"I'll skip the small talk and just simply say it. Do you want Silvana castle?"

Raiden's eyes flinched.

".....What does that mean?"

"The next siege is in 5 days. If you want then I'll give Silvana to you then."

"Are you serious?"

Raiden asked Ark in an incredulous voice.

"Of course it's not for free. 6000 gold."

"What, what the? This kid, are you crazy?"

Raiden jumped in surprise. However, Ark just replied as if he hadn't said such outrageous words.

"Hey, we're talking about the Lordship here. You could get that much from selling cookies at a small store, yet you think that 6000 gold for a territory is too expensive? Besides, you offered me 3,600 gold the other day. You're willing to spend that much on war funds but you won't part with 6000 gold to buy your precious territory?"

"T-that is....."

"You wouldn't have this issue if you had just given it to me in the beginning."

Ark coolly replied. Ark and Raiden had been willing to spend money during the siege because they thought there would be an enormous profit once they had the castle. But that wasn't what he found once he finally occupied the castle. Occupying the castle would certainly be profitable. However, he had to defend it until he obtained the profits. Even if Hermes was an enormous guild, it wouldn't be easy for them to have the funds necessary for the siege. Since he had been in Nagaran for a while, he probably already knew that. There was a high chance that Raiden had already organized that with the other guilds in the alliance. The 5 guilds invested in such a way that they would receive the profits after the estate upgraded. After all, Raiden betrayed Dark Eden over the promise of 30%. No, Ark was the one who didn't know anything when he was making the demands.

"The problem was that I didn't know anything about the castle. Anyway, my requirement is 6000 gold. You decided whether you will take it or not."

"The salary of Silvana's Lord is only 3000 gold!"

As a pioneer, he also had access to such information. However, Ark retorted without even blinking.

"Yes, so that payment is the profit for two months."

"Don't joke around. Do you think I'm a fool? Two months in New World is 3 weeks in reality. I'll have to participate in three sieges in the meantime. We need that money to pay for it. Thanks to the siege, developing the estate until it's not in a deficit anymore would take a few months. But you want to receive 6000 gold without even lifting a finger?"

"I'm not playing around."

The smile disappeared from Ark's face. Ark lowered his upper body and threatened.

“Weren’t you aware of it before the first siege? You had confidence that you would be able to obtain a profit, wasn’t that why you started the siege in the first place? And if you defend it a few times then you’ll definitely get a lot of benefits. Well, I lack the ability to defend the castle which is why I proposed a deal. But I’m the Lord now. I can choose any challenger.”

“What.....?”

“Apart from you, there are other people willing to buy the castle. For example, the Grey Wings guild.”

“Grey wings!”

“The Grey Wings guild would respond to my offer without complaining. Nevertheless, I offered it to you first. Although you betrayed me in the end, I still managed to occupy the castle because of you. I have my own kind of loyalty. That’s all I have to say. Do you want to buy it or not?”

Raiden rolled his eyes at Ark’s words. But he had already decided the answer from the beginning. If Silvana was owned by the Grey Wings then Raiden would have no choice but to siege again. That would require thousands more gold to be poured into his military power. There was also no guarantee of a victory. So he might not even get a profit from it. All Raiden could do was bargain for the best price. As expected, Raiden muttered in a strained voice.

“But right now 6000 gold.....”

‘I made the right call. He should be a beginner in regards to these kinds of deals.’

Ark didn’t seem like he would be good at it compared to Raiden. However, Raiden didn’t know that Ark had been in charge of the family budget since he was young, so he had twice the experience in making money transactions.

“I’ll simply say it. How much can you possible save up?”

“I can only gather 3000 gold in a week.”

“That’s a bit difficult.”

“W-wait a minute. I will give you 3000 gold in a fortnight and write up a contract.”

“I do not believe in contracts now.”

Ark added in a cold and quiet voice.

"But the circumstances are difficult so I'll concede one thing. 4000 gold in cash. I'll allow you to use something else to pay the remaining 2000 gold.

"Something else?"

"The shoes that Duke is wearing.....it looks pretty good?"

Raiden was surprised and shook his head.

"That's impossible."

"I won't accept anything else. 4000 gold and Duke's shoes. Or I'll meet up with Grey Wings and sell them the challenge rights next week. If I don't receive a call tomorrow then I'll see it as a rejection and make a deal with the Grey Wings guild."

Then Ark ended the negotiations. Shoes that enabled him to move freely without breaking his posture! It wasn't an exaggeration to say that Ark's primary purpose was those shoes.

Raiden had just gone through a siege. In order to get the money, he would have to scrape it from his war funds. If he paid Ark 6000 gold then Raiden would have no money left in his funds. The maximum he could get from scraping money together was 4000 gold. So Ark asked for 6000 gold and stealthily sneaked in Duke's shoes as if it was just a side concession. These kinds of sale pitches done in black market shops were nothing to Ark.

'Raiden absolutely can't refuse. He will bring the shoes even if he has to kill Duke.'

As expected, Raiden sent a notification the next day accepting the deal.

"The deposit is 1000 gold. The rest will be paid after you accept Hermes' challenge."

"Okay."

'Raiden will regret this decision for the rest of his life.'

Ark gave a wicked smile and collected the 1000 gold. Anyway, his problem regarding Silvana was solved. Silvana which had been empty will be turned into 4000 gold and unique shoes after 6 days.

'In the meantime I won't just play around!'

"Ajusshi, has everyone done what I told them to?"

"Yes, Berami will take care of the rest."

“Then gather all the NPCs together. From now on we’re exploring the dungeon!”

“Good, I’ll finally get to see an elite monster!”

JusticeMan grinned and raised his arms.

“What? What did you say?”

Duke looked at Raiden with an amazed expression. Raiden scratched his head and muttered an excuse.

“That.....you know the guild’s situation. Since we had to pay for the siege before, we’ve ran out of money. It is much easier to gather 4000 gold in a few days than 6000 gold.”

“But to give that guy Ark my shoes? Does that make sense?”

“I didn’t want it to be this way either! All of this is to take the castle away from him. I’m the one that should be more irate at him! Even though I want to kill him dozens of times, I can’t think like that!”

While he was trying to persuade his guild members, Raiden’s resentment burst out.

“But there is no other way. We can’t miss this opportunity to occupy the castle. I know, I know. After being threatened I also felt ill. But now there is no way to turn around. I’ve already given the 1000 gold deposit to Ark. If I don’t pay the rest then that would be wasted for nothing! Furthermore, all of our efforts will be in vain if Ark just hands the castle to the Grey Wings guild.”

“Indeed.....”

The guild members that had been gathered nodded. In fact, so far the power of Hermes outnumbered Grey Wings by 6:4. But if Grey Wings occupied the castle and becomes the Lord, that would change. Since they’ve already participated in a siege, they knew that defending was more advantageous than attacking. If they took into account the damage Hermes received in the failed siege, their current ratio was 4:6.....No, Grey Wings would have the upper hand with a ratio of 3:7. No matter

how much time and money they spend, it would be impossible to take back the castle once it is in Grey Wings' hands. He wasn't going to let his pride get in the way.

"I promise that when we occupy the castle, I'll reward you first."

"Yes, the guild master is right."

"We'll help you get some shoes later."

"You're not going to betray the guild just because of some shoes are you?"

The guild members surrounded Duke and started pressuring him.

'Damn, I handpicked that item and now I have to give it to that guy.....'

Curses rose in Duke's throat. Those shoes made moving while shooting possible! It wasn't an exaggeration to say that it had the best possible option for a ranger. Although his level was less than the other pioneers, he was able to fight side-by-side with Raiden and Jewel because of those shoes.

However.....now he had to give it to Ark?

Frankly, in this situation he was angrier with Raiden and his guild than about giving Ark his shoes. Meanwhile, the guild members had slowly narrowed the distance. They had already decided to just peel Duke's shoes off.

"No! I'll never do it!"

Duke stared at Raiden and the guild before turning around. He was going to defend his shoes. He just had to hide until the next siege occurred in several days. Well, he might be chewed out by his guild later on but it was better than being deprived of his shoes.

"Eh? Catch him!"

Raiden shouted when he sensed Duke's aim and Duke ran away. However, Duke used his shoes to escape from the guild's encirclement.

'I did it! Heh, do you think I would give up these shoes so easily?'

Duke smiled with satisfaction as he walked through the door. Then a dozen wind chains abruptly rose from the ground and wound around Duke.

-You have been caught by the advanced 'Restraint' spell.

<You will not be able to move for 1 minute>

Duke looked in surprise at the magician who suddenly appeared at the door.

"Eh? J-Jewel, even you.....!"

"We have no choice. This time you'll have to concede a little bit. You'll still be compensated for it. And we still owe Ark a debt. When he leaves Nagaran then we'll strike and get back the shoes."

"Son of a bitch, you're not serious?"

Duke seethed with rage but it was all over from the moment he had been captured by the chains. After that, he was surrounded by the guild members who used intimidation, confusion and hit him for 20 hours until Duke eventually raised the white flag.

"Damn, I got it! I understand! Kuhuk, you dirty bastard. I'll give it!"

Duke shouted, his eyes brimming with tears. However, Raiden's face was still dark even after he got the shoes.

"Phew, I've got the shoes.....but how am I going to get 3000 gold in a few days?"

If he scraped all the japtem together and sold it, he might just be able to make 3000 gold. The deadline was slowly drawing closer.

"Now! Artillerymen, fire!"

He shouted after Ark and the rehabilitation members are cut Goat's health in half. The thieves who were in the back fired the cannons simultaneously.

Tu tu tu tung!

Roaaaaar!

Eventually Goat was engulfed in flames and collapsed. Meanwhile, another Goat was having a fierce struggle against the Meow. The Meow weren't bothering to defend against Goat. Instead they used several reckless attacks that made Ark stiffen with fear. But the situation was different from the time Ark was fighting alone.

"The source of life which boils up from the heart!"

When Roco used the song of recovery, the Meow immediately recovered their health. When Ark, the rehabilitation company and the thieves helped, the remaining Goat instantly collapsed.

-Your level has risen.

'Hahaha, that was pretty quick!'

Ark confirmed the message window and let out a cheer. After Ark decided to sell Silvana, he brought the rehabilitation company and the NPCs to the 'Cradle of Evil' dungeon. The dungeon was overflowing with elite monsters that dropped experience and a magic item every time they killed one. And he was also able to monopolize the dungeon! However, the downside was that the monsters' stats were so high that he couldn't hunt alone. But once he gathered the rehabilitation members and the NPCs, that problem was solved straight away. Ark and the rehabilitation members' intimacy with the NPCs also rose as a result!

'It's good that I didn't tell anyone about this dungeon.'

Ark had not told anyone about the dungeon, including the Lord of Jackson. He reported that the memory crystals were found in a few places in the castle. Because there was a possibility of a team being sent to investigate the dungeon if they knew about it, and in the worst case situation close up the dungeon. This meant that Ark wouldn't have his golden farming ground.

'But I can't use the dungeon for long.'

Once he sold Silvana then he won't be able to enter the dungeon anymore. Ark was so enthusiastic about hunting that he got almost no sleep. After spending 4 days in the dungeon, he was able to reach the 5th floor underground.

“Character information window!”

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment		Good +350	
Fame	6375 (+500)	Level	178
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the Battlefield, Jackson's Hero	
Health	2940 (+150)	Mana	2,805
Spiritual Power	100	Strength	359 (+28)
Agility	499 (+ 35)	Stamina	549 (+20)
Wisdom	58 (+10)	Intelligence	542
Luck	69 (+30)	Flexibility	83
Art of Communication	46	Affection	105 (+10)
Resilience	147		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		138	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10			
*<King> Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20			

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Improved Norad Boots (Shoes): Movement Speed + 15%, Evasion + 10%

Veil of Fire (Mantle): Flame resistance + 50%

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

Mind's Eye (Ring): 'Mind's Eye' enabled

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

\* 40% increase all skills in the dark.\* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

\* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

\* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

\* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

\* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

Even though he was in a party, he was able to gain 14 levels in a few days! Because of the relatively low level of the rehabilitation members and the NPCs, they got an experience bonus and gained an average of 20 levels during the dungeon hunt. It was also common for the monsters to drop magic items. Of course, Ark couldn't grab everything as he wasn't hunting alone. Although it was so valuable that he shed tears, he still had to share the items properly. Well, he couldn't hunt along so he couldn't really complain.....

'I've managed to collect 300 gold which isn't bad.'

Anyway, the hunting speeds became faster and faster because the rehabilitation group and the NPCs had better equipment.

'I have to hunt even more during the remaining time!'

"Dedric, find the next prey!"

JusticeMan turned pale when he heard Ark give the enthusiastic command.

"Huk, you want to immediately hunt again?"

"Yes, there's no time."

When Ark gave the natural sounding reply, the rehabilitation members let out a cry. While the NPCs inevitably had to rest, Ark and the rehabilitation group hunted without getting any sleep.

"Huk huk, Ark, we're going to die."

"Are you always like this when you play the game alone?"

"You only got 3 hours sleep last night after hunting for 30 hours non-stop! Did you even go to the gym?"

"Teacher told me to rest for a few days. I don't get many chances to happily hunt like this."

Ark replied with a smile. In recent times, Lee Myung-ryong hadn't been coming to the gym a lot.

"B-Bastard.....!"

"Ugh.....there are two coming!"

Then without any notice.....No, the astute Dedric had been herding the Goats.

"Son of a bitch!"

"I'm never hunting with you again!"

The rehabilitation members cursed as they had to stand up again. Thus they once again spent 10 hours hunting. By the time Ark reached level 180, it was time for Raiden to pay what he owed.

'Okay, I've achieved the level that I wanted. My heart would like to earn more but.....'

There was a lot of work to do before he could give the estate to Raiden. So Ark ended the hunt and left the dungeon. When he arrived at the Shrine of War, Raiden had reached it first and was waiting nervously.

“Are you ready?”

“Here it is. 3,000 gold and.....”

Raiden handed him a purse and quickly averted his gaze. Duke was standing behind him with a red face and handing him the shoes. He had taken off his equipped item. That was a cause of tears for any gamer. Although it was related to the profit of the guild, Duke couldn't help but stare at the shoes with bloodshot eyes before tears started falling.

“Don't worry, I'll receive it thankfully. I'll treat it well.”

“Oooh!”

Ark quickly packed the shoes while Duke made an expression that seemed like he was going to cry out. But he swallowed the curses that rose in his throat. Raiden looked at Duke apologetically and bluntly said.

“Ark, now it is your turn to keep your end of the deal.”

“I got it. Unlike you, I keep my promises.”

Ark replied before calling the priest over.

“I designate the Hermes guild as the next challenger.”

“I understand. “Thank you. The siege will start tomorrow at 6 a.m.”

The priest explained the siege information.

“By this time tomorrow, the castle will be ours”

“.....I got it. See you tomorrow.”

Ark smiled as he watched the two of them leave the shrine.

‘Huhuhu, I've finally obtained the shoes! Now, should I look at it?’

“Information Window”

Wind Spirit's Boots (Unique)

Armour type: Leather Shoes

Defense power: 50

Durability: 60/60

Weight: 15

User restriction: Level 150 and more

The boots are enchanted with the power of a wind spirit.

A long time ago, a legendary wind spirit used these boots. After the wind spirit carefully polished the leather boots, it gained the ability to speed up the wearer's movements. In addition, you have the ability to glide without moving your feet.

<Option: Agility +30, Movement Speed +30%, Attack Speed +10%>

<Special Option: You can use the skill 'Slide.' When using slide, the player can move to their desired location without moving their body. Since the body isn't being moved, there is no penalty to attack speed, offense and defense.

However, the movement speed is the same and no more than 30 metres can be exceeded. Mana consumption: 10>]

He was stunned by the stats! The leather armour had amazing defense while the option was the best. And Ark could use the skill 'Slide' that he desired more than anything immediately. The methods to utilize this skill were endless.

'All right, I've collected everything. Since the remaining time is 20 hours, I'll put on the finishing touches!'

So Ark restlessly returned to Silvana. He visited Berami as soon as he got back.

"Berami, have you finished what I told you to do?"

"Yes, I've finished it for the moment....."

Berami replied, looking at a huge building that had been erected near the castle. After negotiating with Raiden, Ark had ordered Berami to build a large trading post on the estate. Of course, the money came from the estate's funds. Although he couldn't embezzle the money for personal use, as the Lord he could decide what the money could be used for on the estate.

"Stop any other construction and create a trading post instead."

When he heard the command, Berami asked with an outraged face.

"But that money is needed to repair the Defense Towers and castle walls. But you really want me to stop that construction?"

"Of course."

Ark nodded with a calm face.

"Because of the repeated sieges, the development of Silvana has been delayed and it is an unnecessary waste of money."

"That's true but....."

"The castle shouldn't rely on such foolish things. Anyway, I have no confidence that I will win in the siege. In that case, shouldn't I do something for the estate while I'm still the Lord? Fortunately, Silvana is located in a good position where it can be a trading post. If we can build a trading post on the estate then it will accelerate the development of Silvana. Then the lives of the people living here will become a little bit better. You don't have to waste the precious funds on defending my position."

"M-my Lord!"

Berami shook for the first time. He was different from the other Lords that had only cared about defending the castle! He was sincerely concerned about Silvana's future!

.....That was what he thought.

However, Ark wasn't that good of a person. Berami was so impressed that he started the construction without any protest. Meanwhile Ark proceeded with another plan along with Jjak-tung. Shortly after the construction started, Ark contacted Wolkosu who came from Cairo.

"Wolkosu ajusshi, didn't you manage a large store in Selebrid before?"

"I did."

"Then do you want to operate a trading post here?"

"Trading post?"

"Yes, it is a trading post on the grounds of Silvana and ajusshi will receive substantial compensation. As the Lord I can give permission for Lorenzo to stay here if he wanted to and we'll give you a piece of land to live in."

“Really?”

“But there is one condition.”

“What condition would make me refuse? I’ll do my best to set up the best trading post in Schudenberg.”

Wolkosu nodded and grabbed Ark’s hands. It wasn’t possible to give the funds designate for the estate’s facilities to the user. However the Lord could hire the managers of the facilities, so Ark succeeded in assigning someone to the trading post. Of course the income from the trading post would go to the castle. Ark wouldn’t get any profit even if the trading post did well. However, Ark had learned something from Raiden.

“There are also skills to overturn the rules of the game system!”

In reality, the laws in New World weren’t perfect. Users could find a way to get around the rules depending on the skill. While Ark purchased the land and set up the trading post, Jjak-tung fabricated some documents. It was called ‘Dual Registration’! Of course, the trading post didn’t belong to Ark even if there was dual registration. However, if he created two sets of books then it wouldn’t be difficult for him to hide a part of the trading post’s profits by fabricating the books. But he definitely needed the help of the NPC in charge of the trading post. The condition he required from Wolkosu was to make these double ledgers. And the monitoring station was left to Sid.

“I’m sorry.”

Sid had murmured with a poor expression after he arrived a few days ago. Ark and the rehabilitation members had entrusted Sid with 5,500 gold. After Sid only had the 5000 gold he received back from the Cathedral. He didn’t receive compensation for the 3000 gold Alan stole through a scam. But Ark just hit Sid’s shoulders and said in a soft voice.

“That’s okay. Sid-nim as already suffered in the prison.”

“A, Ark-nim.....!”

“However.....wasn’t it Sid-nim’s fault that the money was lost?”

Ark replied with a smile. As expected, Ark wasn’t going to let him get away with it. Sid gave him anxious glances and stuttered.

“I-I don’t have the money right now!”

"I know, I know. Do you think that I am someone who would ask you to pay it back straight away? Once you earn it then you can pay me back."

"E-earn? But....."

"Huhuhu, I've even prepared a job for you. Sid-nim, from now on please help Wolkosu ajusshi manage the trading post here. Aren't you thankful? The job isn't that difficult. Wolkosu ajusshi will take care of most of it. Of course, 50% of your salary will be used to pay off the 4000 gold."

"4000 gold? Eh, how come.....?"

"Since you're only paying it off with 50% of your salary, I don't know how long it would take you to pay it all. If I deposited it in a bank then I would've gained interest.....you should be glad that I'm not making it more expensive."

Sid's face withered at Ark's words. Since Ark had stared and threatened him indirectly, he had no other choice. Eventually he had to write up a contract stating that he would give Ark 50% of his income until 4000 gold was paid off. It was the perfect slave contract! Thanks to that, Ark could somehow place two people at the trading post. Of course, all those preparations would be useless once Ark wasn't the Lord anymore. So Ark also proceeded with another plan.

'The secret lies within the dungeon!'

Ark had paid attention. If he participated in the siege again one day, he could take advantage of the dungeon to get in. Ark had a crazy idea and ordered the raccoons to create a secret passage out of the dungeon. Then he had them seal up the entrance of the dungeon. It could only be penetrated using the raccoons' skill 'Den Destruction'.....

'That's it, now I can use the secret passage to access the castle anytime I need to.'

That was the reason why Ark willingly handed over the castle to Raiden. While other people were struggling as the Lord to develop the castle, he could just eat up the profits! Once Ark finished all the preparations, he once again visited Berami.

"Berami, how much of the castle's funds are left?"

"Because we completed the trading post in a hurry, there is 50,000 gold left. But after paying 17,000 gold to the employees for their salary, there will be 33,000 gold left."

"You said I was free to use the public money?"

“Yes, of course. You can use it on the Lord’s personal business…….”

“I would like to give the soldiers and administrative personnel a bonus.”

“Yes?”

Berami’s eyes popped out. So far, there have been no Lords that have given a bonus to the NPCs. Of course, most users wouldn’t give up the castle early like Ark.

“Well, it’s possible but…….”

“Then you can take care of the bonus for the soldiers and administrative staff. Please evenly distribute 20,000 gold between them. I’ll also give you a bonus of 200 gold.”

Anyway, it was somebody else’s money. Ark created a good atmosphere and scattered money around. Berami looked puzzled at Ark’s spending. If he used the public money so casually then there would be a setback for the future development of the castle. Moreover, Ark hadn’t paid the cost of maintaining the facilities required for a siege. Thanks to the excessive trading post, the castle was in a serious deficit. Once it fell into a serious deficit, the aftermath might last for several years. Berami hesitated before closing his mouth and nodding.

“Everybody on the estate is thankful for the Lord’s consideration.”

Even if they were NPCs, there was nobody that didn’t like money. There were two reasons why Ark used the public money so carelessly. One reason was to screw with Raiden. Ark still hadn’t forgiven Raiden’s betrayal. Therefore he didn’t want Raiden to touch even one penny of the castle’s money once it was transferred to him.

‘Didn’t I warn him that he would regret touching me? Let’s see that empty head try to handle the castle’s deficit!’

And his second purpose was for the future when he had occupied Silvana again.

-Your degree of intimacy with the residents of Silvana has increased.

-You have become widely known and your fame has increased by 300.

Thanks to the bonus, his intimacy with the soldiers and staff quickly rose. Their enthusiastic support would become useful once he had to try and take back Silvana.

So one week passed like a storm in Silvana. When it was time for the siege, Ark gathered the residents and made a speech.

"My work on the estate has finished. Although I might be lacking, I've tried to sincerely help everybody. Now the siege will begin soon. But I have no ability to keep my position as the Lord. In order to avoid the useless fight, I thought to just leave the castle. But I will promise. Silvana is my 2nd home, so I will come back once I gain the power to defend it!"

Ark spread his arms wide and turned towards the castle.

"Goodbye Silvana, I'll be back soon!"

"Hooray Lord Ark!"

"Kuhuk, goodbye. I won't forget My Lord!"

"You must come back again!"

"We will wait for you My Lord!"

With tears in their eyes, Berami and the castle residents cheered like crazy.

"I've finally got my hands on Silvana!"

Raiden said as he sat down in the office on the top floor.

The castle that he had desired for so long was finally in his hands. For the moment it didn't give a lot of money, but it would soon be the goose that laid a golden egg! Duke who looked depressed sighed and said.

"Don't forget to give the promised share of the profits to me."

"Of course. Just hold on for 2 months. Think of how much footwear you will be able to buy when the castle is upgraded to B class. That Ark guy, he didn't know the value of this castle.....Kukukuk!"

"Let me tell you the financial condition of the estate."

At that time, Berami came to the office. Raiden nodded with an arrogant attitude.

"Yes, speak."

"The current estate is suffering from a serious deficit. The current estate has 0 gold in its funds, and the money the needs to be paid over the next few days is 12,000 gold. It is because the costs of maintaining the facilities haven't been paid for a while. The previous Lord also didn't repair the Defense Towers and castle walls. Since it will be some time before the next tax, if you want to repair it then it will have to come out of the Lord's personal funds. Ah, we also won't be able to pay the Lord's salary until the deficit is cleared."

"W-wait! What did you say? 0 gold in the funds?"

"The former Lord was a very good man."

Berami pushed up his glasses and smiled. He sincerely viewed Ark like that after Ark gave a bonus to the residents. As a result, the castle had entered a deficit. Raiden didn't understand how Ark could be considered a good Lord. Berami made an official looking face and said.

"Do you want me to take out the budget?"

Now Raiden realized that he had been shot in the back by Ark.

"That, that bastard.....Ark! He dares.....!"

Foam started frothing on Raiden's mouth. Even though he had occupied the Lord's seat, in this situation he was basically working for free. But was that all? There was another siege next week. It would be a tight schedule to repair the Defense Towers and castle wall. But the tax would only come after a few days. Even if he scraped the bottom of his personal funds, he would not be able to repair it in time. It wasn't a goose that will lay a golden egg, instead it was a hippopotamus that was sucking all his money.

"Kill him. You have to kill that Ark bastard no matter what it takes!"

"We have to keep the castle first."

Duke who had been restless since he lost his shoes said.

"Hell.....It's not possible. Call everyone in the Hermes Alliance together! They have to urgently secure funds and begin the repairs of the walls and Defense Towers for the moment. If we have the castle taken away now then we're screwed."

"I understand."

Duke bolted outside. Raiden roughly smacked the table with his fists.

“Just wait Ark.....once the estate is stabilized then I’ll teach you not to mess with Raiden. No matter what, I’m going to pay back this debt!”

However, Raiden’s revenge was likely to take a very long time.

## **Act 5: Alan Stabbed to Death**

“Hrmm, it’s a little frustrating?”

Hyun-woo scratched his head. The time had come again for him to submit his report. As always, Hyun-woo only sat down in front of the computer once the deadline was near. It was the last day of the winter holidays and he had to hurriedly finish his homework. But since he could finish the report in 1~2 hours, time wasn’t the issue. His problem was that he couldn’t think of where to begin.

‘How much should I edit?’

Talking about the siege wasn’t an issue. But the process he used to sell the estate was one. Under the current system, selling or transferring the castle was illegal. It could become a big issue in reality. In fact, buying or selling the castle was no different than fraud. And he also used ‘Dual Registration’ at the trading post. Not to mention he set up a secret tunnel as a way to get into the castle later. Ultimately selling the estate using that method was illegal. While Hyun-woo firmly believed that there was justification for it, he had no idea what Global Exos would think.

‘I’ll just leave that part out.’

It was better to avoid any possible problems. So he summed up the eventful week with one sentence, ‘the castle was taken away.’ Although it was somewhat flat, the truth was that he had lost the castle.

“Okay, the report is now finished.....”

Hyun-woo sent the email before stretching. Hunting in the secret dungeon and selling the castle.....it really was a busy week where he hardly had any time to breathe. So he slept and woke up feeling refreshed after finishing everything he had to do. After submitting his report, he exercised in the morning and realised that one month had passed. However, there was still the most important thing that he had to do after one month.

“Time to organize my household accounts!”

Hyun-woo smiled happily. Normally he would sigh because of the tight finances but this month was different! Hyun-woo divided his household ledgers into two. His real household finances and New World’s finances. It was impossible to separate them since they were so closely related. When one rose, just like a seesaw the other had no choice but to fall. The reason was that if he didn’t sell an item then it wasn’t possible to obtain a substantial income. But this was the first time that formula had broken.

‘20,000,000 won!’

That was the bidding price for the ‘Sacred Steel Shield’ after several days. He actually hadn’t expected that much. In the past, his unique mace ‘Fire Slayer’ had sold for 7,000,000 won and the price for unique armour couldn’t even compare to weapons. And shields normally sold for the lowest among the armour. He thought it would be good if he received 15,000,000. And after 10 days the bidding price was 14,000,000 won. But then someone had suddenly bid 20,000,000 won and requested to purchase it immediately.

“Huk, D.....deal!”

Hyun-woo who had accessed the auction site quickly agreed. The buyer immediately asked him to cancel the remaining auction period. But he requested that the money be paid in advance. He had no intention of being tricked by other people. After taking off the handling fee, 18,600,000 won was deposited into his account. While he couldn’t possibly understand the person who would spend 20,000,000 won for one item, thanks to that Hyun-woo would be warm this winter.

“This will last me two to three months!”

Whether it was good or bad luck, it always seemed to come pouring in at once. Hyun-woo put his household account book in order and opened Ark’s account book. The number there was also as beautiful as his household finances. The first item was the 5000 gold that he received once Sid was released. Since he couldn’t entrust Sid with large amounts of money anymore, Ark distributed it according to how much they invested. Ark’s share was 58% so he got 2,900 gold. Then there was the 4000 gold he received from the sale of the estate! Unfortunately, Hyun-woo couldn’t keep all of the estate sale money. He didn’t occupy the castle by himself. He had to concede the majority of it to the NPCs since they made up 80% of his forces. The rehabilitation members had also invested a lot of money into the siege.

‘Cross and the Sylphid Knights also did a lot of damage. I have to prepare the proper compensation for the NPCs. While the Meow, raccoons and thieves didn’t openly

demand anything, I have to give them a certain amount.....other users might not know but NPCs could be lethal.'

Hyun-woo was a man who would bet his life for 10 won. However he wasn't stupid. At a young age, he had experienced all sorts of things. There was no part time job that he had not experienced. If there was one thing that he learnt during that process.....it was that two types of money existed. In other words, if he eat and worked alone then he would be able to obtain 100% of the money.

'But the foundation of my siege was the NPCs I met in New World.'

He keenly realized what a reliable presence they were through the siege. If he ignored their efforts and didn't give them anything then a problem would definitely occur. An NPC was like a human. If they did a favour then of course they would want something in return.

'For the sake of the future, I shouldn't be stingy.'

Thus Hyun-woo decided to boldly invest 3000 gold that he got from selling the castle. First, he gave JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members 1000 gold while he distribute 2000 gold between Cross, the soldiers, the thieves, the Meow and the raccoons.

"You don't have to do this....."

"We came running to defend you because of justice."

"Of course I know that. It really is a pure friendship. But my heart won't accept it. Every time I think of the colleagues who died on the battlefield, my heart starts hurting. Please take it and look after the families of the deceased.

Ark said with a warm tone.

"If you say it like that then I can't possibly refuse. I won't say anything else."

Cross sighed and accepted the money. He felt as if his bones and flesh was being slowly shaved away but being too greedy would cause trouble.

'I've still managed to earn 3,900 gold this time!'

With the 40 gold he received from the Three Little Pigs, it was another 160 gold. In total, he earned 4,060 gold! He felt an excited current flow through his body. If the NPCs were compensated then they would have a reason to look after him.

'The compensation this month has cleared all of my worries in one shot. How good would it be if I could do this every month? This world is not that kind to poor people.....'

Hyun-woo packed up his ledger and looked at the unit. Although he wanted to connect to New World, he checked the clock and turned on the TV. It was time to watch the aired scoop on the game. Information was power. And unlike the false rumours on the information sites, the information on the TV broadcast tended to have more credibility. Since it was broadcast once a week, the freshness of the information was low but it was quite useful as it dealt with a wide range of information. After an advertisement finished, the game exclusive news began.

"Hello everybody in the audience."

The now familiar female reporter laughed as she greeted them. Then she deliberately put on a tragic expression and said.

"This time I have very shocking news to tell you. For those who are not aware, I would like to show you a video obtained by our reporters in Selebrid, the capital of Schudenberg Kingdom."

Soon the screen was replaced by an image of Selebrid square. A crowd had gathered and chattered excitedly in the square where a spokesman was speaking loudly.

"After we obtained information from Silvana, the truth that the church of Asyeosu had committed many misdeeds was revealed. They used the privileges of the church to further their own interests as well as covering up several acts of blasphemy, until it reached a point where it could not be tolerated anymore."

The spokesman said after a deep sigh.

"After His Majesty investigated the church, he has decided to deal with those involved harshly. Therefore if you are offering them any help, you will be charged with the crime of harbouring them."

'In the end the truth was covered up.'

He felt more relaxed after hearing the conversation on the TV. Anyway, the King was taking care to hide all mentions of Ankh, god of death. After the recent troubling events, if the god Ankh was mentioned then the people might fall into a chaos similar to the Dark Century. He also had to worry about the role of the Asyeosu church. Because quite a large number of NPCs worshipped that religion. The situation wasn't bad for Hyun-woo. When all the truths come out, it

would be natural for Hyun-woo to be mentioned. The interest of other users in this matter would be good.

“Is the incident truly that shocking?”

The reporter on screen said back in the studio. Then the male host nodded his head.

“Yes, if you look carefully at New World then the role of the Cathedral is not light. The Holy place of the 12 religions has some of the biggest influences on the continent. That’s why it is called the Cathedral. But now one of the churches is closed due to corruption. For the followers of Asyeosu it is like the sky collapsed.”

“So it will send a large shock wave through New World?”

“Of course.” When the believers of the church of Asyeosu, all the authorities said was that it was a crime and they won’t be explaining the details. There are a lot of people who don’t understand so they’re talking about it.”

“What about the users who have a job related to the Asyeosu church or have a sub-profession related to them?”

“Right. It is not just NPCs affected but users as well. But it will not be a big change. If they select a different religion then their profession will remain intact.”

“What will happen to it in the future?”

“According to the information posted, most of the leaders of the Asyeosu religion have escaped. Searching for the remnants will not be easy. But most of the attention is on the fact that although the King’s decision was very sudden, all the other religions were quiet. They didn’t protest when the King used his authority to invade the Cathedral.”

The male host said with a straight face.

“I think there were other reasons besides the one they told us. And in the future it will clearly be connected to some big event.”

The female reporter asked in a curious voice.

“So you think this will lead to an event in the game?”

“We’ll see. Global Exos hasn’t given a formal reply yet.”

“They have quite a lot of secrets.”

“Well, I understand. The point is to stimulate the curiosity of the users.”

The male host gave a wry smile and changed the topic.

“But in this case, something else was revealed?”

“Yes.....It is really disappointing.”

The female reporter sighed as she mumbled.

“If the event regarding the Asyeosu church made NPCs feel betrayed, this news will make many users feel betrayed. It is regarding the Holy Knight Sir Alan.”

“I hear there was a problem with the siege?”

“Yes, they discovered something after investigating the results in the Shrine of War. During that time, Sir Alan had been abusing the rules of the siege by creating a ghost guild, accepting their challenge and then not fighting in the siege.”

“So that was the reason why he didn’t want to release any video about the siege.....”

“He was afraid that his plan would be revealed.”

Then the female reporter complained with a gloomy face.

“Frankly I’m a little upset. Along with many other female users, I was a fan of Sir Alan. Since Sir Alan always insisted that people should play fairly and honestly, it is a big disappointment.”

“Reporter Lee Hye-won is not the only one who thinks like that. Sir Alan was respected by many users. So their disappointment will be bigger. Our homepage has been bombarded with thousands of messages slandering Sir Alan. On the other hand, quite of few of them were protecting him. Although it wasn’t a proper method, the method itself does not break the rules. Rather, some of them thought it was wonderful that Sir Alan found a blind spot in the system and utilized it. How will this affect the dynamics of Nagaran in this future?”

“The Shrine of War has overhauled the old rules that applied to Nagaran, and they announced that they will delete the Lord’s right to specify the challenger. A more intense siege will occur if the Lord can’t avoid the challenge of a powerful guild.”

‘Ha, everything in this news scoop is related to me.’

Asyeosu's downfall and Alan with the ghost guild. Hyun-Woo uncovered all of it. Because it was handled seriously by the TV, thousands of people posted comments on it. On one hand the events were thrilling but they were also frightening.

'I'm glad that my name wasn't brought up.'

He inwardly sighed with relief. The male host continued.

"Anyway, Sir Alan is in a pretty difficult situation."

"Yes, although the users are offended, I was told that creating a ghost guild isn't actually a criminal offence in New World. However, Sir Alan also has a relationship with the Asyeosu church. While the church was being investigated, it was revealed that Alan had been secretly helping the higher ranked NPCs. This is an obvious transgression. Sir Alan knew about the hidden corruption of the church and hid it. So Sir Alan has also been branded as a follower of Asyeosu."

"Then Sir Alan has become a wanted criminal?"

"Yes, there is a bounty on him. Because Sir Alan has become a criminal, the Dawn Blade guild has been disbanded and its members scattered. Since the reputation of the guild leader is the most important, there is no meaning when he is severely criticized by every NPC."

"I guess Sir Alan's thoughts will probably be complicated."

"You're right. His face has also been publicized on TV. When I went to find him for an interview, he wouldn't meet with me. As everybody knows, in New World you can only create one character. We'll have to see if he can recover and overcome this situation in the future."

"The higher they fly, the worst the impact will be when falling. Since Sir Alan had been so famous, it will be difficult for him to overcome this adversity. But a game is a game and isn't breaking through any difficulty a charm of the game? Although he is in a difficult situation, one day he might recover enough to have users call him using the title 'Sir' again....."

".....It won't happen."

Hyun-woo muttered as he turned off the TV. The man was talking about the standard method. The game was a game, but a situation that occurred in reality would be different in the game. There was nothing in the game that would cause a user to abandon it. They've prepared lots of methods to recover. If you murder someone then you can hide until your chaotic alignment decreases. No, because he

was a wanted fugitive his crimes would only disappear once he was imprisoned. Although it wouldn't be easy to gather his forces again, Alan was clever and had a lot of funds so he might somehow recover.

.....But Alan's opponent was Hyun-woo.

'Alan, didn't you hear me say it? You've picked the wrong opponent.'

Although his agreement with the rehabilitation members was already over, Hyun-woo had no intention of withdrawing like this. Of course, the first reason was because of his grudge. Although it was only because of Lariette and Roco, his grudge about the 3000 gold was truly fearful. And the second reason was because of Alan. Ark had a grudge against Alan but Alan also had a grudge against him. If Alan managed to regain his forces then his knife would be aimed straight towards Hyun-woo. If he was like Hyun-woo then he would be even more troublesome than before. Hyun-woo wasn't going to wait politely until that happened.

'The end? No, it is only the beginning.'

I'll have to kick him until he is trash in the dirt. In other words, I have to kick him as much as possible. Alan's recovery will slow down if he kept on stepping on him and Hyun-woo would be safe for a while.

"But since the situation isn't good, Alan might not connect for a while.'

Hae Gyeol-sa, Bul-kkun and Tazza had already been searching for Alan for a week. It wasn't an easy thing to find a user if you didn't know the resurrection point, and it might take even longer if Alan didn't connect at all.

'But Alan is a candidate. He will have to connect soon.'

Then the phone rang.

"It's me, Alan was found."

The voice heard on the other end was Bul-kkun.

"You found Alan?"

"Yes, dammit! We thought Alan would hide in the vicinity of Nagaran since he was a fugitive.....but he had gone all the way to Selebrid."

"Selebrid?"

Ark repeated in a strange voice. Ark had also thought Alan would hide near Nagaran. Since Alan was a fugitive, he was a target for the guards. If so, it would be easier to escape if he was in Nagaran. Instead of an ordinary village, he had gone all the way to Selebrid which was teeming with guards and bounty hunters? Was he intending to die? Ark couldn't understand his behaviour.

'Anyway, it is an opportunity for me!'

"Hae Gyeol-sa is chasing after him. Since we can't defeat him, we'll try to hold him until you reach Selebrid."

"Yes!"

Hyun-woo hung up and entered the unit.

Alan (Foreigner)

The criminal who conspired with the Asyeosu church.

Since he had the ability of a Holy Knight, special care is needed.

Area last seen: His location after Nagaran is unknown.

Difficulty: ???

Bounty: 300 gold

Bounty payer: Chancellor of Selebrid

'That's fantastic!'

When he arrived in Selebrid, he immediately saw Alan's bounty posters. In Schudenberg Kingdom, the bounty posters were updated every few days on the board. The members of the Asyeosu church were NPCs. Usually NPCs were only wanted in the area the crime was committed, however the Asyeosu church was wanted throughout the whole continent. Alan also occupied a spot on the board. His

bounty was 300 gold! That was an unprecedented price compared to other NPCs. The amount of the bounty determined the punishment time. It was usually 10 gold for 24 hours. If Alan was imprisoned, he wouldn't be able to see sunlight for a month. One month.....if he was imprisoned for that long then he would obviously fall behind. Since Alan was a candidate, he had no choice but to run away until the bounty somehow went away.

"Sheesh, this bastard, he was so smug when he appeared on TV....."

"Obviously he would win if he used such a lousy method."

"At one time I thought he was so great."

"I'm disappointed. Turns out he only has a good face!"

People were gathering around the bulletin board and hurling abusive language at his poster. In fact, there was no reason for them to curse at Alan. After investigating at the Shrine of War, it was revealed that Alan used a ghost guild to win the siege. Since it was just a game, they had no reason to care about the Asyeosu church. Even so, the reason they started excessively cursing Alan.....since he appeared so great on TV, the shock of his fall was huge. Since Alan had been so big, the blow was even larger. Of course, he didn't feel compassion for Alan.

'I'm not some hero who puts on a mask of justice.'

Ark was laughing at the poster when his name was called.

"Ark!"

Bul-kkun had contacted him.

"What about Alan?"

"He is hiding in the mountains not far from here. Hae Gyeol-sa and Tazza are watching him."

"Then I'll go now."

"However, will it be okay since Hyung-nim and the others haven't arrived yet?"

"Don't worry. Alan is not a very difficult opponent anymore."

Ark smiled and left Selebrid with Bul-kkun. Bul-kkun used 'Feather of Whispering' to contact Hae Gyeol-sa who was chasing after Alan. And 10 minutes later, he was able to find Alan hiding in a dark forest. Alan's equipment had become tattered and

he was eating mouldy bread. Since he couldn't enter a village, he couldn't repair his equipment or buy food so he was forced to rely on wheat bread that thieves dropped to fill his satiety. It had been 1 week since Alan and the one thousand coalition members returned devastated after the failed siege.

'His appearance makes you want to throw a coin at him.'

Ark sincerely felt sympathy. He thought that there might be old guild members that had stuck around in the vicinity. If it was Alan when the game first began, more people might have defended him. But when Alan suddenly changed, Lariette wasn't the only one who became worried. The guild members were treated coldly and like accessories. The majority of the people in the guild were candidates. Since Alan was famous, their probability of success would increase. But now Alan had lost all his reputation. There was no reason to risk themselves for no reward. Alan's power relied on the pros and cons that he could give them.

'Poor guy.....sitting with that appearance.....I kind of don't want to step on him.'

But Ark was a ruthless human.

"Hyung-nims, surround this guy and don't let him escape."

"What? You're really going to face him alone?"

"I've already done it once."

".....Understood."

Hae Gyeol-sa, Tazza and Bul-kkun scattered around the place. Once they were in position, Ark leisurely walked out. Alan immediately jumped like a frightened rabbit and stood up. The piece of wheat bread he was eating fell to his foot. Alan really felt like crying.

"You.....how are you here.....!"

Alan said after he saw Ark's face.

"Didn't I tell you? I have no intention of ending it like that."

"You bastard, well met!"

Alan swung his sword without any notice. Ark stepped backwards and blocked the sword. Since it was a sudden attack, he failed to completely disperse the impact. But a small smile still spread on Ark's face.

'As expected!'

"You don't understand the situation."

Ark immediately fixed his posture and stabbed with his sword. Alan flinched and barely lifted his shield in time. Although he blocked the attack, there was a ringing sound as Alan was pushed back a few steps. Even though he blocked with the shield, he still received a lot of damage.

"W-what is this.....?"

Alan murmured with a puzzled face. Ark looked at him and laughed.

"Have you finally realised a little bit of the situation Sir Alan?"

The conclusion from the short bout was simple. Surprisingly, Ark was stronger than Alan! Ark had already expected that. Alan's profession was Holy Knight, and the Holy Knight gained its maximum strength when he was leading a lot of troops. The more soldiers there were the more his stats would increase! In addition, he received a bonus to the power and range of his skills depending on his fame. Even if Ark was high levelled, it wasn't easy for him to win against Alan in a group battle. But the situation changed. Since Alan was now completely forsaken, there was nobody to boost his stats. Ark also grew while Alan was hiding. After discovering the secret dungeon in Silvana, he reached level 180. If he counted the dark attribute bonus then he was level 252! On the other hand, Alan had only gained 4 levels to reach 160. Not only his level, but Ark's stats were also higher than his. Even if Ark's sword didn't directly hit him, it would still be quite painful.

"Let's see how evenly matched we are!"

.....Frankly, it wasn't that even.

Pepepepeng!

Ark began to attack Alan in earnest. He swung his sword while turning his body. With most warriors, there was a gap in the timing of attacks where the opponent could attack. But Ark had already overcome that weakness a long time ago. He used the opportunity to kick Alan as well. Since his abilities were so much higher, the heavy kick was like poison to Alan's body. The difference in stats clearly showed.

"Huk, I'm in an abnormal state?"

Alan staggered because he was in a 'slowed' state. Ark's sword continuously flashed as he moved his hands. Every attack accurately stabbed a gap between the armour! Alan's health was steadily drained by the constant critical hits.

"Eat this, Holy Light!"

Alan hurriedly used his Holy magic. Thanks to the ball of light, Ark's dark attribute bonus was released.

"Heavenly Light, Miracle Force, Defense Aura!"

Alan followed with three skills that would increase his attack and defense. However, the skills of a Holy Knight were also based on fame. Because he was chaotic, his fame was at the bottom and the effects of the skills were cut in half. But Ark's dark attribute bonus was still released and Alan's stats rose a little bit so they were at similar levels.

"Heung, you still think that I'll lose?"

Alan wielded his sword like a storm and cornered Ark. However, Ark's skills were still stronger. He had a lot of experience dealing with strong bosses without any buffs.

Teteng, kakakak!

While Alan's attack only hit once, Ark's hit three or four times. However, Ark's health still decreased faster. While his dark attribute added damage, the Holy Knight had was covered in armour and rare items. Alan realised that Ark's sword had more speed than power.

"You foolish noob, you'll regret appearing in front of me by yourself!"

"You still seem to be misunderstanding something."

"What?"

"I'm sorry but this isn't all of my strength. Summon demon, Deimos!"

There was a faint light and Deimos was summoned in front of Ark in time to block Alan's sword. Meanwhile he stepped back a bit.

"Ha, you think an undead can stop me?"

Alan thought it was ridiculous and brandished his sword at Deimos. A Holy Knight had a powerful advantage against the undead. But just as Alan's sword was about to hit Deimos, Ark's eyes glittered and he said.

"Slide!"

Ark used the special option 'Slide' from the Wind Spirits' Boots that he took from Duke. Then he did a series of kicks while sliding backwards. Ark withdrew a few metres away from Alan. That was the reason why he wanted the Wind Spirits' Boots. His kicks had three times the power of his punches. But he still used boxing over taekwondo in fights.....the reason was because his kicks had a fatal weakness. Boxing allowed him to move his body while punching. But when he was kicking, once he started the movements he had no way to stop. He couldn't move freely and take the steps required to move forwards or backwards. This could become a huge weakness in a fight. The power was strong but there was a lot of room for a counterattack.

It was one of the reasons why kicks weren't seen a lot in mixed martial arts competitions. If you have the same level of proficiency then it would be more beneficial to use boxing then kicking. In reality it was an insurmountable wall! This wall also existed in the game. Although Ark had a lot of kicks in the beginning, as the monsters levels rose he started using it less. But what if it was possible to move while doing the kicking motion? Ark thought of that idea while watching Duke use 'Slide.' And the combination showed an effect that was beyond his imagination. He could freely control the distance while kicking!

Once Alan was caught by Deimos, he was helpless to stop Ark from beating him with the kicks. He would kick and then slide away like he was moving on ice. The situation completely changed because of one item. That's the excitement of a game!

While trying to attack Deimos, the slide kick of Ark caused Alan a lot of headaches. If he tried to go after Ark then Deimos would act as a shield. Alan was caught by the pincer formation and couldn't do anything as his health kept on decreasing. His recovery skills had also lost their effectiveness. But since Alan had a rare upper class profession, he lasted for quite a while. Of course he could use Blade Storm to settle it, but Ark was determined to finish Alan using kicks.

'I'll slowly crush you.'

His grudge wasn't something that could be released quickly.

"Ugh.....!"

Alan stepped back and took out a recovery potion. He had run out of mana because of his recovery skills.

“Not a chance. Summon Demon, Dedric!”

“Aha, it is my turn! Dark Dash!”

Dedric was aware of Ark’s intention as soon as he was summoned fiercely rushed towards Alan. Dedric bumped into Alan’s wrist causing him to drop the potion. And his situation worsened since he was surrounded by Ark and his two pets.

“This is the end!”

“Damn, it can’t be. Flash!”

At the moment a blinding light emerged from Alan’s body.

-‘Flash’ has triggered a critical effect!

Due to the ‘Flash’ effect, you have been paralyzed for 10 seconds.

He was careless! ‘Flash’ was a beginner magic and could be easily avoided. However, Ark was careless and ended up losing his eyesight.

“Woaaah, my eyes!”

Dedric grabbed his eyes and wandered towards the trees.

“Mind’s Eye!”

Ark used the effect of the ring and lifted his sword after the paralysis wore off. He thought that Alan would counterattack with a strong skill. Instead Alan just pushed Deimos aside and tried to flee. When Ark saw it he just laughed.

“It’s too late Alan.”

“Where are you going?”

At that time, Bul-kkun suddenly appeared in front of Alan and punched him. Alan who was hit by the sudden blow fell down. Then the faces of Hae Gyeol-sa and Tazza appeared on either side of him. Alan instinctively sensed his death.

“Our resentment for you killing our cutie is pretty deep!”

“.....Divine god, replace equipment!”

After Hae Gyeol-sa, Bul-kkun and Tazza ran up to him, Alan shouted something. At that moment, Alan was wrapped in light and his equipment was replaced. A sense of confusion appeared on Ark's face before he realized.

“Huk! Ah, no! Kill him, kill Alan!”

Ark shouted as he ran up using 'Sprint.'

Bul-kkun, Hae Gyeol-sa and Tazza attacked simultaneously. Alan's health immediately disappeared. But Alan just smiled before he died.

“Killing me.....you'll only get honour.....think.....don't wish for anymore.....”

“Son of a bitch!”

Profanities burst from Ark's mouth. When a chaotic player died, the penalty for death was doubled. He would lose 60% experience and -2 stats! But the horrific penalty was the chance of losing an equipped item. Alan's equipment was all rare items, so no matter what dropped it would be a jackpot. Because it wasn't possible to change armour during a fight, the probability was 100%. But Alan had used a strange skill at the very end to change all his equipment to japtem.

Old Shoes

Armour type: Leather Shoes

Defense power: 15

Durability: 7/35

Weight: 5

User restriction: Level 70 and more

A shoe that is commonly seen everywhere.

Once he saw the trivial stats in the information window, his anger erupted.

“That damn Alan bastard.....Ya, I'm going to tear him apart!”

Ark's summons attacked Alan's body at his command.

Deimos as used his 'Bone Collector' skill to reassemble the ribs.

Since he changed bones with a user, their stats are exchanged.

<Deimos: Stamina +5, Defense +2>

<Alan: Stamina -5, Defense -2>

Dedric has used Vampirism.

A new skill has been saved in the empty slot.

\* Currently absorbed skill: <Defense Aura> which increases defense by 20%. Mana consumption: 10

Even though he took it out on the body, his anger had not abated at all. Ark bit his lip until it became bloody and lifted his head.

"Do you know Alan's last updated resurrection point?"

"Yes, it is the quartermaster near Selebrid's north gate."

".....Really?"

Ark's face lit up at Hae Gyeol-sa's answer. A chaotic user lost one item every time they died. Once the equipment he was wearing all dropped, items from his bag would start dropping. So there was still a chance to obtain his equipment.

"I have no intention of leaving it like this."

"Of course!"

"Then I'll hunt properly and go to the quartermaster's tomorrow. Alan will probably connect at that time."

Ark's forecast was correct. Alan thought that Ark didn't know the resurrection point and he didn't want to seem scared of Ark by not connecting, so he resurrected in Selebrid after exactly 24 hours.

"Hey, it's good to see you."

"Ark.....!"

Alan stared at Ark aggressively. But in New World there was no skill that could kill the opponent with anger. This time the battle was much easier. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members had already arrived. After 13 people surrounded him, Alan had no chance. Halfway through the battle Alan just gave up and didn't bother counterattacking. Alan once again dropped japtem when he died. However, Ark didn't care. Thanks to Alan's proud nature, he revived a few times before being killed. How many times would Ark have to kill him before he dropped a useful item?

'Eh? He's not here?'

However, after Alan died twice more he didn't connect even after 24 hours passed.

'Is he trying to make me relax my strength?'

Alan was a candidate so he would have to connect. Perhaps he was waiting for Ark to get tired. But Ark was relentless and won't give up. Ark assigned 3~4 rehabilitation members to guard the quartermaster's in shifts. So after 12 hours.....when Ark was getting tired Alan suddenly resurrected.

'Ha, I knew it. You don't I couldn't endure until you resurrected?'

Ark and the rehabilitation members stood up and surrounded Alan.

"Divine god, replace equipment!"

It was at that time. Alan used the skill to change to his original equipment. And immediately rushed forward and slammed his shield into Jjak-tung. Jjak-tung had low defense and immediately collapsed while Alan jumped over him and ran.

"He's trying to run away? Eh.....?"

Ark was confused but quickly chased after him. Alan fled towards Selebrid. He was a chaotic user wanted by the whole country yet he fled towards a place filled with guards. Did he intend to kill himself? But Ark finally realized Alan's intention.

'Yes, that bastard. He judged that it would be difficult to run away from me so he's intending to go jail?'

As he already knew, most people killed or captured by hunters or guards were automatically thrown in jail. Ark didn't register to capture Alan because of that. Although the prize money was good if he registered as a bounty hunter, he would only be able to kill Alan once. Alan was clearly trying to use that against

him. If he died because of Ark he would lose all his equipment, so Alan would rather die because of a guard and then go jail.

“Do you think I would let you do that? Snake, sword! Blade.....eh?”

After Snake spat out the sword, he was about to use the skill but suddenly flinched and stopped.

“Eh, he, he is.....?”

“Alan!”

The guards rushed forward as Alan ran through the north gate. If he used Blade Storm then the guards would be caught as well. If that happened then Ark would be registered as a criminal. Ark put the sword away and ran using ‘Sprint.’ He had to get to Alan before the guards!

“Jeez, what are you doing? You’re interfering!”

“I’m really sorry. I’m a broke hunter and I’m trying to catch Alan.....”

Ark deliberately blocked the guards and narrowed the distance. Alan was already surrounded by many guards. But there was something wrong with Alan’s behaviour. Although he was surrounded, he used recovery magic to prevent himself from dying while he ran away. His behaviour after resurrecting was strange. If he intended to die then he should’ve exchanged the equipment.

‘Does he have some other purpose?’

Ark saw the direction that Alan was running in and suddenly became shocked.

‘T-that.....don’t tell me that Alan?’

Alan was running up to a mailbox. Clearly an item couldn’t be exchanged through a general mailbox. But there was one way to exchange items even with the general mailbox. The auction site! Yes, it was the auction site’s item delivery method. The auction method in New World was unique in that Ark could put an item up for auction or purchase something even in places like a dungeon. If the unit was connected to the computer and the computer to the access site then they could put items on the auction site at any time. And once the payment was complete, the item would automatically be sent to the buyer’s mailbox.

‘Alan definitely purchased an item to escape this situation. Then the item is.....?’

Thanks to his health that was like a cockroach's and recovery magic, Alan finally arrived at the mailbox. Then he hurriedly took out a bundle of scrolls and tore one. Then Alan disappeared from among the guards.

'It was indeed the [Warp] scroll!'

Alan had escaped the crisis in a way that Ark had never imagined.

"Sheesh, I almost caught him....."

The guards muttered and scattered. But what was Ark doing?

'The travel distance of [Warp] is 500 metres. But he had a bunch of scrolls that he is going to use. So there is no way to chase him.'

Alan had a weapon that was necessary for chaotic users. The scroll that allowed him to randomly teleport! Although the [Warp] scroll moved him, even Alan would not be able to predict where he would end up. It was difficult to chase someone using those scrolls.

'Should I give up?'

Of course, Hae Gyeol-sa might be able to find him. However, there was no guarantee of how long it would take. Ark knew that the time taken to track him would probably be more than a week.

"Damn, if I registered as a bounty hunter then I would've at least earned 300 gold....."

Ark muttered in an annoyed voice.

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake suddenly jumped down and slithered towards the place where Alan disappeared. After it licked the ground, its body stiffened and headed motioned towards a direction. After Snake pointed like an arrow towards a direction, a message window appeared.

Snake has used 'Stalking.'

It is possible to grasp the location of the attacker.

Even if they 'Warp', 'Teleport', 'Portal' and so on, Snake can predict the movement direction using the flow of mana. However, the exact distance is impossible so you

can only determine the direction. In addition, the effect will disappear after 1 hour if you don't find new information.

<Current Mana Flow: The Southwest direction>

"Eh? Stalking?"

Ark glanced at Snake with wide eyes. Since there was no reason to check Snake's information window, he hadn't known about the new skill.

"Don't tell me.....you learned it yourself?"

Ssak! Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake's eyes brightened like lanterns as it nodded.

"That's it! Aigoo, my cute baby!"

Ark skipped forward and embraced Snake as he jumped around. Then he kissed the very happy Snake. Ark immediately gathered the rehabilitation members together and explained the situation. After he registered as a bounty hunter, they started to move in the direction that Snake pointed out.

'Alan, this is the last time. I'll send you to prison with my own hands.....'

## **Act 6: Salrin's Descendant**

"Huk, huk, huk!"

Alan gasped and ran breathlessly through the forest. When he used the [Warp] scroll, he thought that he had completely lost Ark. But hardly any time had passed before Ark and the rehabilitation members started chasing him.

'Does he have the [Track] scroll?'

[Track] was a scroll that could find the designated target within a 1km radius! Ark was dangerous if he had that scroll. Alan continuously used [Warp] until he was out of the maximum distance of the tracking scroll. But once again Ark's party narrowed the distance in a short time. That was when Alan realised there was something

strange. Ark's party clearly guessed the exact point Alan teleported to. But they don't know his exact location once they narrow the distance.

'Do they just know the approximate direction?'

If they weren't using a scroll then it must be a racial special skill. When he thought about it, Alan realised that he had a little leeway. Once Alan moved to a direction and the encircling net got closer, he would use the scroll to escape from the crisis. But this was Alan's mistake. If Alan didn't use the scroll after 1 hour, Snake would not be able to use 'Stalking' to determine the direction. Since Alan continuously used the scroll, Snake was able to update the information. And eventually he only had one scroll left after the relentless chase.

'Damn, I thought one bunch would be enough.....but it's okay, my destination is right around the corner. All I need to do is get there.....and watch them eliminate Ark!'

Alan looked at the ridge in the distance. It was a place where he could rest safely even though he was chaotic. No, they would definitely help him for a chance to kill Ark! There was only one such force in New World. The Dark Brother organization! Yes, the reason Alan had risked coming to Selebrid was to make contact with the Dark Brothers. Just like Ark, Alan had no intention of forgiving Ark.

'If it wasn't for Ark, I wouldn't have been deprived of my castle or branded a criminal! All the things I earned in New World crumbled into dust because of that child.....Even if I have to spend hundreds or thousands of gold, I'll definitely make you quit the game!'

He didn't know if it was fortunate or unfortunate that he couldn't lose Ark. Now the Dark Brothers didn't have to use a lot of effort to find him.

'Whether in the game or reality, the ultimate winner is the rich man. Someone like him can never win! I'll engrave that fact into his bones!'

Alan used his resentment as energy and finally reached the ridge. When he searched the forest, he finally found the small cave hidden by bushes. The cave led to the location of the Dark Brothers. He followed the passage until he arrived he saw a red palm painted. However, the atmosphere was different from before. Previously, the assassins had hid in the darkness until he raised his shining sword to see them.

"Who's that? Is it that guy.....?"

'That guy?'

There was something strange but Alan was in no condition to question it closely.

"Dark Bothers? I have come with a job request."

"What? Do you think this place will accept requests from anyone?"

"I'm Alan. I've already commissioned a job before."

"Alan? Holy Knight Alan?"

"I'd like to meet the person in charge."

The assassins secretly spoke among themselves before Alan was shown inside. When he entered, the form of a man stood up and his features became visible. He had a large red palm on his flapping cloak. It was not the old man he saw the previous time, but the assassin's attitude made it seem like he was in charge.

"Leader-nim, Alan has come with a request."

The leader was silent for a moment before asking.

".....The opponent?"

"Ark? The Lord of Silvana?"

"He already had the castle take away so he's not the Lord anymore."

"Is that so? He fought so persistently for the castle just to throw it away?"

He murmured while the leader laughed and shook his head.

"Well that doesn't matter to me. But since the famous Alan is requesting it so urgently, that Ark fellow doesn't seem so insignificant."

"It doesn't matter how much money it takes. I don't want to hire all of the Dark Brother organization. The purpose is the infinite assassination of Ark! The period is until Ark disappears from New World."

"What's the condition if you can't pay the price?"

"I already said it doesn't matter how much money it takes."

"Hmmm, this could become quite messy. However, I already know about the relationship between you and Ark. Didn't you originally have it out for each other?"

And now with users and NPCs after you, the only place you can lean on is the Dark Brothers.”

“Are you going to accept or not?”

Alan retorted with a nasty expression. But the very next moment, Alan realised that something was wrong. The Dark Brothers was an NPC organization. But the leader just used the words ‘user’ and ‘NPC.’ Those two words were taboo for NPCs in New World. Then why did that person talk about users? And how did he know about the relationship between Alan and Ark? Alan became wary and withdrew a few steps.

“Who are you?”

“Now that we’re face to face, we should greet each other.”

The guy slowly turned his body around. He had black hair and black eyes. Although he was wearing a mask, the overall impression was familiar somehow. It was certainly not the first time he saw that user. Where had he seen him.....he searched his memories for a while before suddenly spluttering.

“Huk, you.....Jackson.....!”

“I’m thankful that you remembered.”

Of course he knew! In Jackson he was always by Ark’s side, the name.....!

“.....I’m Shambala.”

“W-what are you doing here?”

“I won’t speak for long. The conclusion is that I reject your request.”

“What?”

“I still have something to do with Ark. Well, it’s not just about that.....the Dark Brothers is in a situation where it can’t accept any requests right now, even if the target isn’t Ark.”

“If you need money. I’m willing to pay it separately. How much do you want?”

Alan shouted in a desperate tone. He didn’t understand it completely, but Shambala seemed to have a strong influence in the Dark Brothers. But if he paid the NPC organization then it wouldn’t enter Shambala’s wallet. Alan thought that Shambala refused the request because it wasn’t profitable.

".....You're irritating me now."

Instantaneously Shambala's eyes became freezing cold.

"I don't like people. In particular, I despise humans who would betray others for money. But I also have contempt for a human who won't let a grudge go. Do you know who I am?"

Shambala showed his teeth as he growled.

"Guys like you who throw money around just invite betrayal."

".....!"

"Well that's enough. I still have something to settle with Ark. I was worried about how to pay Ark but.....he might consider you to be worthy of a trade."

"You bastard!"

"Capture him alive."

The assassins gathered after Shambala gave the order. When the situation suddenly changed, Alan immediately turned around and took out his shield.

'I didn't come here just to die in vain!'

Alan fled from the daggers coming from every direction. The opponents were assassins who mastered the assassination technique. The assassins gave Alan abnormal states such as 'Slow' or 'Paralysis.' But Alan was also a Holy Knight. He immediately overlapped his three auras to raise his defense and resistance. And he endured the rest using recovery magic. A Holy Knight had intermediate recovery magic and high defense so Alan's health was similar to a cockroach's. Alan maintained his defensive posture and gradually escaped the encirclement.

"Blink!"

Then he heard Shambala's voice from the rear. Shambala used the skill to instantly move beside him. Alan jumped and swung his sword. However, Shambala used 'Burning Mirror' and drove the dagger into him. After the dagger was removed, he swung it again and Alan was pushed back a few metres. It was Shambala's chain skill! Alan lost 500 health with one attack.

"God dammit.....!"

So far while playing the game, he had not been pressed so hard by somebody. But recently he had experienced a lot of defeats. First he had been beaten like a dog and then pursued by Ark and now Shambala was beating him up. Of course he would be able to defeat Ark and Shambala if he had some properly equipped troops. No, if he had his original fame then he wouldn't suffer like this. It would be easy to deal with these miserable guys.....it was so unfair that he was on the verge of tears. But no there was no other way. With the assassins attacking alongside Shambala, they were too powerful for Alan.

"Defense rise, Movement rise!"

Alan activated both options attached to his items. Then he hit an assassin while in a defensive stance and ran away. It was pathetic but that was Alan's only method of resistance. But even with his defense increased, it wasn't possible to ignore the damage. His health continuously decreased until he only had 10% left.

'But the encirclement has relaxed for the moment! I can drink a potion.....'

At that time Alan had a little bit of hope. Then like a scene from a ninja movie Shambala ran up and across the wall, landing in front of Alan and blocking his path.

"I'm sorry but it ends here. 'Capture'!"

Something that looked like spider webs poured out from Shambala's mouth. It was an assassin exclusive skill that could only be used when the opponent was in a critical condition.

'Ah, no! If I get caught by him then he'll give me back to Ark.....!'

Beodduk, seokeok!

At that moment a rope wound around Alan's waist! Then multiple swords emerged from the darkness and cut the rope to pieces. At the same time, a number of masked men attacked Shambala. Surprisingly they also had the mark of a red palm on their masks. Shambala's forehead wrinkled at their appearance.

"Sheesh, these guys are still.....!"

'What the? Why are the assassins attacking Shambala? What the hell is going on?'

Then while Alan was contemplating the situation he suddenly heard someone's voice from the other side.

"This way Sir Alan!"

“You.....?”

It was an old man beckoning with a desperate face. It was the old man called Nabein who answered Alan’s request last time.

‘I don’t know what is going on, but this is a chance for me!’

Alan struck an assassin who was approaching with his shield and reached Nabein.

“Now, retreat!”

The newly emerged assassins flocked Alan and Nabein and blocked the entrance. An intense fight took place while Alan exited the cave with Nabein. There were 10 assassins waiting outside the cave.

“Nabein, what is happening?”

“I don’t have time to explain in detail. Although the urgent fire is put out for the moment, we can’t hold them off much longer. In addition, others are going to appear soon. We have to quickly get out of here.”

“Others?”

“Stop foolishly wasting time talking!”

Nabein shouted in a harsh voice.

“Anyway come along! It won’t be a bad talk for you.”

Alan hesitate but eventually ran alongside Nabein. Anyway, Shambala was still in the cave while Ark was tracking him. He didn’t have anywhere else to go.

“Where the hell is that bastard hiding?”

Ark grumbled while looking at the cliffs high above him. As Alan predicted, Ark had tracked Alan until he was right underneath his nose. However Snake’s information from ‘Stalking’ only told him the direction. Snake indicated that Alan

entered a complicated cave system underneath the cliff. It wasn't able to determine anything else.

'Although I went around the cliff, Snake is still indicated towards it. There is no way he is stuck on a rock so there must be an entrance around here.....'

Ark pursed his lips. The duration of stalking was 1 hour, he either had to find Alan before that or find the [warp] location to update the information, but there was not much time left now. If he couldn't find any clues on Alan then he wouldn't be able to chase him anymore.

'He want into a confusing place like a dungeon.'

Ssak ssak ssak!

At that time, Snake licked him using its tongue and demanded attention. For the first time he pointed to a direction away from the cliff.

"What the? Snake, did Alan leave the cave?"

Ssak ssak! Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake's eyes brightened as it nodded.

"Dedric, to the south! Search!"

Ark quickly commanded Dedric to fly in the direction Snake indicated. Ark followed behind him for a while until Dedric quickly flew back.

"M-master! I found him."

"Where?"

"300 metres ahead. But he's not alone."

"Not alone?"

"Yes, he's going someone with 10 masked people."

"Masked? Perhaps.....The Dark Brothers?"

"That's right, there's a picture of a red palm on the mask."

'That's right, the Dark Brothers.....that explains it.'

Now he could understand why Alan took the risk and fled here. He had forgotten for a while. Assassins from the Dark Brothers.....

Even during all of this, Alan hadn't discarded his idea of revenge on Ark. The Dark Brothers wouldn't care if Alan was chaotic and would accept the commission regardless.

'Damn, I never thought that the Dark Brother organization would be in this area.'

The situation became desperate. If Alan commissioned an assassination from the Dark Brothers then it would be Ark and the rehabilitation members being chased. Moreover, it was the Dark Brother's domain so there was no guarantee that they could escape.

'Alan has already contacted the Dark Brothers. There will be no way if kill Alan if they're protecting him. But since the assassins haven't made any sudden moves, he might not have made the request yet. Okay, I have to check it out properly before leaving.'

"Dedric, keep a suitable distance and follow those guys."

Ark ordered Dedric to secretly follow Alan.

"They entered over there."

Dedric pointed to a cleverly hidden cave.

"Any assassins around?"

"I didn't see any."

"Then....."

Ark carefully approached the cave. There weren't any idiots who would disguise the cave and then not leave a guard. He assumed that there were assassins guarding the inside. Ark made Dedric wait by the entrance and entered the cave. When he entered, the effect of a dungeon was applied. Ark immediately hid with 'Stealth' and breathed a sigh of relief.

'Now I don't have to worry about being discovered.'

Ark silenced his footsteps and explored the cave. The cave was divided into several areas, just like a secret base. There were considerable amounts of assassins gathered in each area.

"If Stealth is detected then I would definitely die."

Luckily, Ark was level 252 with the darkness bonus so the assassins couldn't detect him. However, he couldn't be assured. If the sound of footsteps makes them suspicious then the chances of 'Stealth' being detected would increase. As assassins, their ability to see through 'Stealth' was much better than normal assassins.

'Even if I'm undetected, the duration is only 20 minutes. I have to collect as much information as I can before time runs out.'

Ark carefully grasped the structure of the cave and the number of assassins. When he was almost at the end of the cave, he suddenly heard a familiar voice.

"Salrin?"

'Alan's voice!'

Ark quickly attached himself to a corner and looked inside. Alan and an old man were sitting facing each other under the light of a candle. The old man.....Nabein nodded and replied.

"Yes, Salrin.....although it is not widely known, but he was Seinan, one of the 7 heroes.

'Seinan?'

It was a name that was often discussed in New World's history books. He was the most secretive of the 7 heroes. There weren't 7 heroes originally. But when a hero collapsed in the middle of a fight against the darkness, he suddenly appeared like a comet and helped the hero. In the Final Battle, he showed incredible skill and was given the title of Hero afterwards.

"Why did you suddenly mention the name Seinan here?"

Alan asked the question that Ark was wondering about. Nabein replied in a low voice.

"Seinan.....no he is Salrin, a Master Assassin."

"A Master Assassin?"

"Yes, the person who reigned over all the assassins was the Assassin Salrin."

Nabein casually told Alan a shocking story about the continent's history. Salrin was the head of the prestigious Dark Brothers during that time. And at the end of the

Dark Century, the Dark Brothers got the most prestigious commission in his life. The enemy was threatening the continent which led to a request to assassinate the Dark Lord..... After a few days contemplating he eventually accepted the request.

The Dark Brothers judged that the existence of light was necessary to live in the darkness. That was how the 6 heroes became the legendary 7 heroes. And at the end of an intense battle, the 7 heroes finally defeated the Dark Lord. Salrin was praised as a hero even though he was an assassin and became the ruler of a dukedom that eventually became known as Sinuis Principality.

“But what does this have to do with the Dark Brothers now.....?”

“Once Salrin became a hero, he mistakenly thought that the Dark Brothers could emerge from the darkness. Centuries of history couldn’t be undone by one person. The Dark Brothers eventually helped the Sinius King from the darkness. But once it became peaceful after the Dark Century ended, the need for the Dark Brothers became smaller. After Salrin was killed, the Dark Brothers broke away from the Sinuis Principality. When the Dark Brothers left, their main treasures also became scattered.”

“Treasure?”

“The Dark Brothers were originally nomadic people from a distant country. When they came to the continent, they brought three treasures with them. The foundation and strength of the Dark Brothers was based on those treasures. Salrin was called a Master Assassin because he had those three treasures.”

Nabein said while letting out a sigh of relief.

“One of them is the Dark Veil, a cloak that can stop the forces of darkness. An elder in the Dark Brothers has it at the moment. Without that, the Dark Brothers would’ve vanished a long time ago.”

“Then the remaining two?”

“According to the legends, it is a dagger quenched in the blood of a thousand people and a armour made from the leather of the corpses. All of them have an incredible power, but if all three were collected then the person would unlock the ability of a Master Assassin. But I don’t know where they are. They disappeared in to history along with those of Salrin’s blood.”

Nabein made a disgusted face and continued.

“That’s why it is impossible for Shambala to appear with the items!”

‘Shambala!’

The hairs on Ark’s neck rose. In fact, before Ark left for Nagaran he sent a letter from Shambala requesting help. But there was still no reply. The quest must be taking longer than expected.....was what he thought. But to hear Shambala’s name in a place like this!

‘Then Shambala’s quest is associated with the Dark Brothers.....’

Was the quest to obtain Salrin’s treasures from the Dark Brothers? When he thought about it, everything made sense. The symbol of the Dark Brothers was carved on Shambala’s dagger. If so, the blade that Ark sold Shambala was one of the treasures. Shambala then completed the dagger quest that was triggered. One of the treasures of Salrin, a member of the 7 heroes!

‘Shambala had a quest relating to his profession. His occupation and skills are somewhat peculiar.....his Saint Assassin profession has something to do with the 7 heroes. Finally, if he finds the three treasures then he’ll unlock the ability of a Master Assassin.’

It was most likely why their skills were so compatible. In the past, the 7 heroes had fought together against the darkness. Thus it was impossible for abilities that Ark and Shambala inherited to not work with each other. In addition, the Master Assassin and Hero Maban were the only ones with the darkness attribute among the 7 heroes. He didn’t know what happened during that time, but their relationship couldn’t have been trivial. The descendants of those two heroes had transcended time and space to meet. Although they didn’t know each other, their skills still remembered the past.

‘It really is an amazing coincidence.’

Ark was once again amazed at the world of New World.

‘Seizing control of the Dark Brothers is also similar to the way I controlled the Meow and raccoons. Does that mean I won’t have to worry about the Dark Brothers anymore once that happens?’

Ark licked his lips with anticipation. Alan was also thinking that and asked with a doubtful expression.

“Shambala has Salrin’s treasures.....that is why he appeared at the rendezvous place. But why did you rescue me? If he has Salrin’s treasures then the Dark Brothers should.....”

"I can't accept it!"

Nabein suddenly shouted.

"I respect Salrin. But Salrin lived hundreds of years ago. It's not even a part of his lineage, yet now the Dark Brothers has to listen to some child just because he has the treasures.....does that make any sense? We're the ones that have defended the Dark Brothers for a century!"

"Then Shambala hasn't become the leader of the Dark Brothers?"

Alan's question made Nabein snort.

"Leader? It's not that easy. No matter how sick I am, who could accept a child as the leader? But the elders have accepted him."

"Elders?"

"Yes, the Dark Brothers has weakened since the treasures scattered. But Shambala suddenly gathered one of them. So he has justification to gather the descendants of the Dark Brothers that have scattered. Well, it's not just that....."

Nabein's voice rose with annoyance at the end.

"Anyway, the elders still have a vain hope that the Dark Brothers can emerge from the darkness. So Shambala was recognized as a candidate for the leadership and will be given a trial. If he passes then Shambala will be recognized as a Master Assassin."

Although it was a long explanation it could be simply summarized. Shambala changed his profession to one of the 7 heroes related classes. Just like Ark had to find the Three Marvels left behind by Hero Maban, Shambala also had to find Salrin's three treasures to change to his secondary profession. Once he obtains the 3 treasures, he will unlock the key to become a Master Assassin. However, it wasn't as easy as it sounded. It wasn't easy for Ark to get the recognition of the Meow and raccoon clans. If he failed then he wouldn't be able to change his occupation to a more advanced one. That probably applied to all hero related classes.

Speaking of the trial to change to the 2nd occupation.....in Shambala's case, that guy Nabein was the one standing in the way. The game made a complicated relationship that Shambala would have to clear up. In that case, how will Nabein interfere with Shambala? Just as Ark became curious, Nabein stared answering his question.

"But I can't follow that vain dreamer of an Elder anymore. If it was impossible for Salrin then that young child definitely can't accomplish it."

"Then.....?"

"Not long ago Shambala passed the trial the Elder gave him. Since Shambala passed the test, the elders will soon reward him with the Dark Veil. I can't possibly allow those treasures to remain in the hands of a foreigner."

An eerie light shone in Nabein's eyes.

"This is the only chance. Shambala will have to activate the dagger during the ceremony to receive the power of two treasures. That is the only chance to steal the dagger."

"Are you rebelling?"

"It is not a rebellion. I'm just taking back the treasure while squashing Shambala and the elders in the process. And I will revive the glory of the Dark Brothers after I own the two treasures!"

Nabein exclaimed.

"But won't there be a lot of assassins?"

"I've already put in measures to deal with them. Since they are aware of a potential attack, many assassins will be defended the outskirts just in case. And the headquarters of the Dark Brothers.....there are a lot of brothers sympathetic to our ideas. If we take action then they promised to fight together."

Nabein smiled and approached Alan.

"But there are also a lot of foolish guys who support the elders. Our victory is assured, but it won't be an easy fight. That's the reason we decided to take a risk and save you."

"Are you asking me for help?"

Alan had already anticipated Nabein's request.

"It's not a bad thing. I already know your circumstances. You have no place left in the Schudenberg Kingdom. Your guild has been disbanded while hunters are chasing you so you can't get any rest. But if you help us and we succeed then things will change. The Dark Brothers will grant you sanctuary and the power needed to hold off your enemies."

Alan's eyes shone. After he lost the Lord's position, he was reduced to a fugitive. Even the Asyeosu church that promised him a secondary profession had been ruined. In such a situation, it was difficult for Alan to refuse the temptation of the offer.

No, there was no other choice. If he didn't get help from the Dark Brothers then it wouldn't be possible to avoid Ark's sword. Since he had a hostile relationship with Shambala, he might even be chased by his assassins. Besides.....

Nabein wasn't being kind when he made the offer. The message was also a threat of what would happen if he refused.

"Okay, I'll cooperate."

"I thought you would accept."

Nabein laughed as he replied. There was a reason Nabein took the risk of saving Alan.....although Alan would've been beaten up by Shambala and Ark, the situation had now gone through a 180 degree change. The Holy Knight's skills became more useful when he had more troops. He also affected the skills of his whole unit. The presence of a Holy Knight in a war equalled to the power of a dozen troops.

"I want to check my equipment before resting.....do you have someone who can look at the equipment?"

"Of course. Just rest comfortably until it is time."

"When is the action taking place?"

"Tomorrow, tomorrow at midnight."

'Tomorrow midnight.....!'

Ark stored the information in his head and left the cave. Tomorrow midnight was in approximately 10 hours, which fortunately meant that he still had time.

'I have to consult with JusticeMan ajusshi.'

Since he knew about it, it wasn't possible for Ark to let them get away with it.

After he left the cave, Ark gathered JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members. They had to crawl on the ground in order to avoid the attention of the assassins. Meanwhile Roco screamed when she saw Ark who looked like a beggar and made them wash and do laundry. Because the situation was so rushed, Ark briefly summarized what he heard in the cave.

"You can't pretend that you didn't hear what they said."

JusticeMan said in a serious tone.

"They'll have a lot of power if they attack from the rear.....if they've made preparations in advance then they would've definitely prepared a way to attack from the rear. If there are also forces ready to revolt then it is likely to succeed."

"Alan also has an aura of leadership, if they are influenced by that leadership....."

"It is game over."

Alan would become a lot stronger even if there was only one person in his unit. If Alan helped the war, then the difference would change from 5:5 to 7:3. Since he was chaotic his skills decreased, but Holy Knight was still one of New World's strongest occupations.

"The problem is after that."

Ark said with a serious expression.

"If Shambala is defeated then it is likely that Alan will seize a lot of power in the Dark Brother."

".....If that happens then it'll be a big threat to us."

When Alan lead Dawn Blade, he still wore the mask of hypocrisy. Even if there was a problem, he had to act like a knight on the surface. But now Alan had no more fame to lose. He didn't have to pay attention to others. Ark didn't know what Alan would do if he took over the Dark Brothers. Only thing he could be sure of is that Ark and the rehabilitation members will be the first target. They'll become the target of all the assassins in the Dark Brothers!

The assassins were different from normal NPCs. Even if a user had a hostile relationship with the guards, they could still play the game. But they were assassins, and if they orders from Alan then the assassins definitely wouldn't hesitate. That was the worrisome part.

"That Alan, he's still so persistent until the end."

"It is simple."

At that time, Jjak-tung shrugged and summed up the situation.

"If Alan succeeds then he'll have a way to step on us. If we succeed then we'll step on Alan."

"Hrmm, he is a huge mortal enemy."

Tazza was one of the intellectual ones and nodded.

"We have to prevent Nabein's rebellion in order to stop Alan."

"We urgently need to inform Shambala first."

"But I can't get in contact with Shambala. Since it is happening at midnight tomorrow, he might not get a letter in time. Without knowing the Dark Brothers headquarters, there is no way to visit them....."

"Let's take a look at this."

JusticeMan took out some scrolls. JusticeMan arrived late because he was purchasing some scrolls. He bought the [Track] scroll in case Alan used [Warp]. However, Shambala's name did not trigger the [Track] skill. The Dark Brothers headquarters was either more than 1km away or it was classified as a city.

Within a city, there were many constraints on the use of scrolls. The [Track] scroll could only find a user if they were not in a city.

"What now?"

"There is only one way left."

JusticeMan replied after Ark asked in a worried voice.

"We don't know the location of the Dark Brother's headquarters. But we know that those guys are going to do a surprise attack."

“Ah, then.....?”

“Didn’t they say the surprise attack on Shambala was at midnight tomorrow? It isn’t possible to stop them with our power. So we’ll stay concealed and put surveillance on them, and when they attack Shambala then we’ll attack from behind. It’ll be more effective if we attack from behind while Shambala attacks from the front.”

“So we’re going to strike the bastards in the back of the head.”

“That’s right.”

JusticeMan laughed and nodded. Then Ark started monitoring the assassins’ lair. But he couldn’t just waste time.

‘The Dark Brother assassins are strong.’

Ark had fought the assassins several times so he knew to be afraid of them. Of course, Ark became so much stronger that it wasn’t possible to compare to that time.....

‘But the levels of NPCs isn’t fixed in New World.’

NPCs could also level up. He knew that fact for a long time. But with a battle against NPCs ahead of it, Ark found it quite stressful. The first battle he experienced with NPCs was with Viscount Haverstein and the Sylphid Knights. He didn’t know it at the time, but the Sylphid Knights seemed to be about level 50. Ark was level 20 at the same so they seemed distant to him. But when he participated in the quest at level 70, he was a lot stronger than them. However the Sylphid Knights were still strong. Ark had raised his level. But the NPCs also raise their level according to the average level of the users. There was no guarantee that he could deal with 3~4 assassins alone.

‘The Dark Brothers will also be different from the last time we fought.’

While Ark watched, he also made a variety of survival cooking dishes with different buffs. So 10 hours passed and it was finally midnight of the next day.....

“That’s strange?”

JusticeMan’s head tilted.

“Isn’t it already midnight? Even if the Dark Brothers’ headquarters was nearby, there still should’ve moved a while ago if they want to make the deadline.....why is it so quiet?”

"Come to think of it....."

Ark's heart dropped as he remembered something. He also couldn't see the assassins that had been patrolling around a while ago.

"I'll check it out."

Ark used 'stealth' and entered the cave.

'What, what the? What happened?'

There should've been 100 assassins but he couldn't see any. Something was messed up. Ark hurriedly searched the cave but he could only find 3~4 assassins.

'Don't tell me.....It's already started? But I've been keeping an eye on the cave entrance.....how did so many people go unnoticed.....'

Once he considered Nabein's words, Ark finally figured out why.

"Oops, I was wrong. The old man wasn't going to surprise attack the troops defending the outside. He never planned on a frontal assault. There must be a path that leads inside the headquarters. And since they didn't leave, there must be a secret passage in here somewhere!"

Then Alan and Nabein were already heading towards the headquarters of the Dark Brothers.

"Damn, hurry up and look for the secret passage!"

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members plunged into the cave.

"What, what? Who are you?"

"Can't you tell by looking? The side of justice!"

Kwajik, peuk, dangtang!

The 3~4 assassins were smashed in an instant. Hae Gyeol-sa then tied up an assassin who was in a critical state with his 'Chain' skill.

"Ugh.....did Shambala send these guys?"

"Tell me! Where did they go?"

"Kukuku, it's too late. The Liberation Army has already left."

"The Liberation Army will fall. Where is it? The passage that connects to the Dark Brothers' location?"

"Do you hear what you're saying. It is useless, you won't be able to kill them!"

The assassin glared at him. But such courage couldn't even last for a few seconds against Hae Gyeol-sa.

"Ah, would you like to beep-beep you son of a bitch beep-beep?"

Advanced Intimidation!

The assassin's face paled and he stammered.

"C-candlestick....."

Hae Gyeol-sa quickly glanced at Ark. Come to think of it, he previously saw a candlestick that was slightly different than the others. A sound rang out and the wall shot back when Ark twisted the candlestick in the opposite direction. Then the intimidated assassin started talking in a distant voice.

"Kukuku, it's too late. By now, the elders and Shambala should've died already....."

Pepepek!

Before the assassin could finish talking, he became a bloody rice cake.

"There's no time. If Shambala dies then everything is finished!"

Ark ran down the secret passage leading the rehabilitation members.

## **Act 7: Salrin's Towers**

"Y-you....."

Someone was kneeling down clutching his chest which was soaked with blood. He breathed roughly while looking at the dozen bodies around him. The man's eyes were shaken. The masked assassins wearing black clothes.....death for an assassin wasn't peaceful. They had killed others. They were prepared for their deaths. Death to them was just an ordinary part of their lives. But the death reflected in his eyes was different. Until now, he had believed that the 20 masked

men who killed his brothers were also his siblings. Betrayal! Since they lived in the darkness together, it was rare for them to betray each other. The man lifted his head and bared his teeth.

"You filthy traitors, aren't you ashamed of lifting your sword with those hands? We might live in the darkness but we have our own pride. We are descendants of the great Hero Salrin, a Master Assassin. Did you guys forget that while following Nabein?"

"We did not forget. It would be impossible to forget."

"That is why we cannot accept a foreigner as the leader."

"We will strike you all down to defend the pride of the clan."

".....Is that so?"

The man stared at them with piercing eyes. The assassins flinched while the man opened his mouth.

"The Elders would always say it. Although we live in the darkness, we shouldn't let the darkness inhabit our hearts. Although we cannot reach it, we should always strive towards the light. Until the day that we regain our name.....but you guys have stained your hands with your brothers' blood and have become dark. Pitiful."

"Shut up, the Elders are forcing us to do this!"

"Haven't you grasped the situation yet?"

"Answer, number 358. Do you want to live under the glory of a new Dark Brothers or die thanks to the pitiful delusion of the past?"

"It is nonsense!"

The man snorted and raised his neck.

"If you fear death then you're already not a Dark Brother."

".....It was impossible."

The assassins simultaneously lifted their swords. At that moment a loud yell came from a dark hallway.

"Dark blade!"

A sharp sword cut through the darkness. The assassin who was hit by the sword received an extravagant amount of damage. The assassins simultaneously turned their bodies. There were more than 10 people coming from the hallway on the other side. The only people in Salrin's Towers should be masked assassins in black clothes. But these people were dressed messily with some wearing no armour. Yes, it was Ark and the rehabilitation members who had followed the assassins' secret passage. Of course, the assassins didn't know their identities so the obvious question was asked.

"Who are you?"

"We're Shambala's friends!"

"What?"

The assassins flinched and raised their sword in unison. Then Ark smiled and spoke to JusticeMan.

"Did you see? The ones who lifted their swords are the enemy."

"Handle all of them except for the injured assassin."

JusticeMan lowered his upper body and using explosive acceleration, he approached the assassins. The surprised assassin brandished his sword. But JusticeMan just rotated to the side and grasped the assassin's shoulder. No, with just his grip he threw the assassin across the room and the assassin became stuck in the wall.

"Phew, that old geezer is quite furious."

"Are you already stronger than were you were on active duty?"

"The Tiger of the SWAT team has been revived."

The rehabilitation members marvelled over the scene. When the level increased then it was natural to become stronger. But JusticeMan's case was slightly different. JusticeMan was once the feared Tiger of the SWAT team. Although he did not talk about it, there were few people that could beat him in a one-on-one fight. However, his skills had become rusty after his injury and retirement. And he thought that he could never return to that condition.....JusticeMan keenly sensed that it could not be revived. In reality, his strength and speed had decreased due to age. But he could compensate for the lack of speed and strength with his stats in New World. And his experience and practical sense could be converted into combat power.

"Now, bring it on!"

JusticeMan threw the assassins like they were fish.

"We can't be defeated by such an old geezer!"

"We were still active until recently!"

"Hahaha, let me see your skills!"

"Today I'll catch them. Beep-and-beep- bastards!"

The rehabilitation members ran up to the assassins.

Syu, pepepepek!

Tazza has amazing dexterity and used the skill 'Throw Dagger' to throw 5 daggers simultaneously. Bul-kkun wore steel gloves and crushed the faces of the assassins. The assassins tried to take control of the battle using their swift movements, but they stiffened thanks to Hae Gyeol-sa's 'Intimidation.' But the real hit was Roco's song.

"My hometown is on a faraway mountain, where apricot blossoms and azalea flowers bloom....."

Once Roco began to sing, the assassins' movements immediately slowed down.

Roco's registered song 'My Hometown' was played.

<The fighting spirit of all the chaotic characters in range is reduced. Strength -20, Agility -20, Attack -20>

In the meantime, Roco had levelled up her Art stat to 250. She once again gained a new ability. So Roco was able to select a suitable song and save it as a skill.

The effects varied depending on the nature of the song. For example 'My Hometown' raised nostalgia for the past, making anyone with the chaotic status lose their fighting spirit.

"Damn, killing and seeing death everyday.....until when do I have to live like this?"

"Wah, I suddenly feel like seeing my mother who passed away."

After the skill was used, the assassins immediately murmured with melancholy voices. It was like a scene where the criminals felt regret after listening to sad music. In the beginning, the Minstrel might be dismissed but it changed to a strange character after raising it. Although the skill affected the chaotic characters, it didn't make them surrender. But JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members couldn't be compared to before.

Even when they learned certain odd skills, it was still useful on the battlefield. The experience of the siege in Nagaran was also carved into their flesh and bones. In addition, they also spent a while in the secret dungeon.....no, they also raised their variety of skills by a lot. Was that all? Ark also painstakingly cooked food and raised their stats. Even though they were only level 140, it wasn't hard for them to fight against the assassins.

'Now Hyungs have found a way to integrate their battle style perfectly.'

Ark looked at the rehabilitation members warmly. Of course, Ark didn't play around either.

"Riposte!"

Ark immediately deflected the assassin's attack. It was his counterattack skill, Riposte! The assassin was pushed back and fell down like a bowling pin.

"There's no time. I must act quickly. Snake, one sword!"

Ark exploded the sword using Blade Storm. The space was filled with turbulent sword fragments! The barrage of sharp fragments tore into the assassins like the claws of a monster. He used the experience from the time he was hunting hook bats. But the assassins weren't as easily defeated as the hook bats.

"Ugh, u-unbelievable.....!"

Through the swirl of debris some assassins swung their swords. They wanted to deal critical hits to Ark before they collapsed. However, Ark's body slid back before the swords even reached him. He used the option from the Wind Spirits' Boots, Slide!

"What, what the?"

Thanks to that, the assassins collapsed in vain. One end of Ark's mouth lifted.

"Slide kick!"

He did a high spinning kick before sliding back!

“W-what’s this nonsense……gag!”

An assassin received the kick on his upper right temple and collapsed. Ark allowed JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members to deal with the 4 remaining assassins.

“Okay, this is good enough.”

The rehabilitation members spoke in a confident voice. In the old days, they wouldn’t have been able to handle 3~4 assassins so it was a big development.

“Huhuhu, it was worth almost dying to raise the level.”

The opponent who didn’t have enough power was beaten. Of course, this also applied to reality. However, in reality it could take a few months or even years to increase their strength. In New World, they could become stronger faster. It was the reason why RPGs were the most addictive games.

“……Who on earth are you?”

The injured man asked in a confused voice. Ark was already a little bit aware of the situation.

“Are you an Elder?”

“Elder? How do you know about what’s happening here?”

“Like I said, we came to help Shambala.”

“Shambala……Leader? To help the Leader?”

The man said with a surprised expression.

“If the Leader is called Shambala then yes. There’s no time to explain. We happened to find out by chance that Shambala is in a crisis. But we have no idea where to go since we don’t know the geography of this place. Could you help us?”

The man looked at them suspiciously. The Dark Brothers’ headquarters, Salrin’s Tower was completely isolated from the outside world. Then some strange foreigners suddenly appeared and said they would help. It wasn’t easy to believe such words. Ark also guessed what he was thinking, but in such a situation it wasn’t possible to mention the name Ark. Although the situation was strangely entangled, Ark and the Dark Brothers still had a hostile relationship. Ark contemplated for a moment before lifting his arm.

“I’m sure a Dark Brother would recognize this?”

"That.....was on the Leader's wrist.....Gladiator's Honour?"

"That's right. Only two people have earned this. Shambala and I."

"Then you.....?"

"I'm Dark Wolf who paired up with Shambala at the Evil Silrion."

"Dark Wolf!"

The man looked at Ark with shocked eyes. The whole world has heard Dark Wolf's name, and that included the Dark Brothers. And the fact that an item called 'Gladiator's Honour' belonged to them was also spread. Thanks to that, the man began to believe Ark.

"What is the situation?"

".....It isn't good."

The man sighed and replied.

"Those who left the Dark Brothers knew about this opportunity and left some plans in place.....In addition, a number of Brothers collapsed because of a surprise attack by traitors."

"Shambala?"

"Leader is still safe and sound. No matter how many elite people they have, they can't all enter Jaerim Tower or it will collapse. But I don't know how long we can hold out....."

"Jaerim Tower?"

"It is where the ceremony took place."

"Could you show the way?"

".....Of course."

Roco treated the man's injuries.

"Come on, follow me. I'm called number 358."

According to the man's words, only people in a special position were allowed to have names. But the only person allowed to give them a name was the Master

Assassin. Since there hadn't been one for hundreds of years, the Dark Brothers were just called by numbers.

"Once Leader conquered all the trials and became the Master Assassin, he would give us our names. That is the wish of all the brothers. And finally a leader appeared after hundreds of years but Nabein....."

In the midst of the trouble, number 358 still didn't forget the role of an NPC. Although Ark didn't ask, he still gave away some information on the Dark Brothers. Of course Ark wasn't interested. However, the rehabilitation members nodded with sympathetic gazes.

"Doesn't it seem just like Nam-ssi?"

"It must not be very pleasant to be called numbers."

"It is just like a prison guard, calling the prisoners by number."

"Number 358.....I somehow feel a sense of empathy with him."

"Come on, we can talk later so hurry up."

"I know."

Ark's party exited the basement after being guided by number 358. Although he imagined the assassins' headquarters as a gloomy cave, it was actually a gorgeous tower made of obsidian.

'It isn't possible to see this from outside.'

When he looked through the window, he saw the cliffs surrounding it like a folding screen. The forces of nature completely concealed the three towers that stretched up several metres high.

Yaksok Tower, Jaerim Tower and Gyeolsok Tower. These three towers were secretly concealed by the Dark Brothers for hundreds of years, and were collectively known as Salrin's Towers. The place Ark's party entered was Gyeolsok's Tower.

Anyway, the top of Salrin's Towers were engulfed in confusion. Numerous assassins fighting could be seen through the open beehive windows. If the assassins fell then it was a horrible scene with blood splattering.

'Since they're dressed the same, I don't know what the situation is.'

"Is the situation bad?"

"Yes."

Number 358 moaned and pointed towards the centre tower.

"That is the top of Jaerim Tower where the ceremony was supposed to be held. The Elders and Leader are there."

A long battle was unfolding on top of Jaerim Tower. But they were too far away to grasp the battle situation.

"Summon Demon, Dedric! Check the top of the tower!"

"Understood!"

Dedric flew quickly across the sky. After a while, Dedric came back and explained what was going on in Jaerim Tower.

"Everybody is wearing the same outfit so I don't know what is happening. It is confirmed that Alan is pressing Shambala in the tower. But he hasn't been captured yet.....it seems pretty dangerous?"

"Alan!"

Ark growled while number 358 asked with a gloomy expression.

"You know Alan?"

"Yes, I actually knew about this because I was chasing after him."

"That's right. I don't know how he appeared here but their abilities rose thanks to him. We had no time to prepare before Alan had already entered Jaerim Tower."

"Are there any troops supporting the Elders?"

"The Elders' troops have all been dispatched to patrol the outskirts. The Elders never imagined that there would be a secret passage. If they came then the problem would be settled.....Nabein is the elder that knows the most about Salrin's Towers. Thanks to the surprise attack, it would take some time for the troops to reach here."

"So for the moment we can't expect any help."

"Yes."

"Then there is no time for this."

“We can’t allow Alan to do what he wants!”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members shouted. Selecting number 358 to guide Ark was the perfect choice. No matter what the appearance, Salrin’s Towers was still the hiding place of assassins. In contrast to the outside, the interior was a complex maze. Ark and his companions arrived so late because of that. It took them a while to reach the basement after exiting the secret passage. In addition, they came to help but the Dark Brothers were chaotic NPCs. Ark couldn’t tell who was on Alan’s side because they looked identical. But with number 358 guiding them, such problems were easily settled. When they arrived at a group of assassins fighting, number 358 shouted.

“All the followers of Salrin rip one sleeve off!”

Some of those who were fighting tore off their sleeve.

“The targets are those without ripped sleeves!”

“Well, that is convenient. Let’s go!”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members jumped into the rough fight. Although the assassins with shredded sleeves were losing, when Ark’s party joined the situation immediately changed. They rushed forward like a wolf pack. The 10 of them used their various skills and easily took care of the assassins. Once the battle was over, the assassins with ripped sleeves approached.

“Huk huk huk, number 358. Who are these foreigners?”

Number 358 had quite a high position among the assassins.

“They’re friends of Leader and have come to help.”

“The Leader?”

When the situation was explained the assassins immediately lost their wariness. They probably would’ve been attacked if number 358 wasn’t there.

“They’re skilful, just like what we expect from a colleague of Leader. Although it is shameful, we will receive your help.”

“Wait.”

Ark ran and blocked the assassins.

“It looks like I’ll have to reorganize the party.”

During the last battle, there were 20 assassins with ripped sleeves. But afterwards, only 13 of them survived. If they weren't in the party, then the chaotic NPCs wouldn't receive the effects of Roco's songs or Ark's Nursing. But if the chaotic NPC were in the same group then the buff effect would be applied. If they became a part of the group then it was also easier to increase the combat power by applying tactics.

"That sounds better in my opinion."

"Understood. Although you are foreigners, since the purpose is the same then there is no reason to be reluctant."

JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and the assassins nodded and agreed. Ark dismissed his party and reorganized it to include the assassins. The effect definitely showed. In fact, the melee combat taking place on top of Salrin's Towers was very strange. There were hundreds of people engaged in sporadic battles throughout the tower. Fresh blood and fire flew everywhere. Even so, he did not hear one scream. It was to the extent that it seemed like he was looking at a war film on mute. The reason was because they were assassins who were trained not to scream even if their heads were cut off. The assassins also had a keen sense of the action on the battlefield. If they were running then a sword would suddenly appear out of nowhere. It was the assassins who hid using 'Stealth' or 'Ambush.'

If it was only the rehabilitation members then they probably would've received a lot of damage. But the risk of that fell thanks to the assassins.

"These guys, using such clumsy deception in Salrin's Towers!"

Number 358 and the assassins instinctively blocked the glittering sword. They could detect 'Stealth' if the level wasn't that much higher than them. However, the response speed of the assassins to the opponents' attack couldn't be compared to the rehabilitation members. The assassin specialized in coping with a crisis. The assassins were taken by surprise and 'Stealth' was deactivated. But they died after Ark and the rehabilitation members attacked without bothering to confirm the features. The assassins were chaotic NPCs. Chaotic users had a much higher probability of dropping items. And since the assassins were rebels, Ark and the rehabilitation members could pretend ignorance and take the items.

'The assassins are quite high levelled so I'm pleased.'

While going up the tower, they saved quite a number of senior assassins from a crisis and increased their numbers. Roco's songs also had a huge effect. Usually the opponents were equipped with items that would contain debuffs or buffs that would increase resistance, but the enemies were all assassins. They couldn't apply buffs or recovery magic outside of potions or herbs. The difference in a group battle was

extravagant. As the battle continued it became more profitable. By the time they reached the top floor, their numbers had already grown to 80 assassins.

“We can reach Jaerim Tower once we get to the top!”

Number 358 yelled as he ran up the stairs.

“What, what the? Who are these guys?”

“Did those guys down there die?”

“Stop them, there’s not a lot left anymore!”

“If we kill the Elders and the Leader then it is our victory!”

Dozens of rebels blocked the stairs.

“Those damn traitors……!”

Number 358 was in front and received some damage. Then Ark stepped on number 358’s shoulders, jumped and shattered his sword.

“Blade Storm!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The sword debris swirled fiercely around the rebels. Ark fell between the rebels. As soon as attacks flew from all sides, Ark evaded using Dark Dance and followed up with Dark Blade and his chain skill Dark Strike. The reason that Ark was able to attack so recklessly was because of their weapons. The assassin had two main weapons. The dagger that was associated with assassins and a blackjack, which was a blunt weapon. A blackjack was a blunt weapon with a leather pouch that was filled with iron powder. Because of its power, it had a high probability of inflicting ‘Stun’ or ‘Faint’ once hit. While assassins in medieval times killed without leaving a trace, the blackjack was a historical weapon often used. But Ark was rather fortunate.

-Thanks to Resilience, the damage of Blackjack has been reduced by 20%.

Because of his resilience, he didn’t get stunned.

‘It was worth the effort of raising it!’

Ark used his spare time in Nagaran to raise his resilience. Unlike other stats, it was a stat that would increase if he was hit. Because Ark almost died fighting a monster with a blunt instrument, he called Dedric and had him beat Ark up. So in a fortnight he raised his resilience to 200 points! So it unconditionally alleviated the damage of blunt weapons by 20%. Since he also evaded attacks using Dark Dance, he didn't receive a lot of damage.

Pepepepeng!

Once Ark invoked his skills, the assassins' formation collapsed. Then the rehabilitation members and assassins attacked the rebels, cleaning them up in an instant. When they reached the top of the stairs and exited, there was a bridge which connected to Jaerim Tower. Nabein's army of rebels already controlled it. The Elders and Shambala were trapped inside Jaerim Tower.

"Penetrate it!"

"Eh? You?"

Ark's party entered the bridge crowded with rebels. However, the width of the bridge was only 5 metres. Although there were a number of enemies, only 3~4 of them could fight at the same time! When Ark and the rehabilitation members ran onto the bridge, they immediately pushed the rebels.

"Riposte!"

Ark repelled the rebels and reached the middle of the bridge. Then he saw a flash of shiny armour from among the assassins standing in front of Jaerim Tower.

"Alan!"

"Ark, how did you get here.....?"

Alan reflexively flinched after he turned his head.

"I came for you!"

"Did you wipe out all the assassins trying to take over Gyeolsok Tower?"

Alan figured out the situation after seeing all the assassins behind Ark. For a moment Alan was confused, before a cold smile flashed on his face.

"Luckily I prepared for this."

Alan clapped his hands and the rebels retreated.

‘What the?’

Ark looked at Alan strangely. Then the rebels turned and looked at numerous scrolls attached to the railing. At that moment an icy sensation slid down his back.

‘The [Explosion] scroll!’

It was a scroll that he had seen many times. Ark suspected Alan’s plan and started to scream.

“Stop, retreat!”

“It’s too late!”

Alan smiled and activated a scroll. Flames started spewing along the railing of the bridge. Then.....!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The hundreds of scrolls caught fire in a chain. The scrolls activated at the same time and there was a huge shock wave. In fact, [Bomb] was not a very powerful scroll. It only did 40~50 damage. But if hundreds exploded at the same time then the damage was unimaginable. The solid bridge broke into pieces. Roco screamed as the bridge burst into flames.

“Oppa!”

Ark was in the front and had caught the main blast of the explosion.

‘Oh my God!’

Ark bit his lips tightly. Since the target of [Bomb] was the bridge, Ark didn’t receive a lot of damage. He was enveloped in flames but thanks to the 50% fire resistance of his ‘Veil of Fire,’ his damage was cut in half. The problem was that only JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members managed to get off the bridge before it collapsed. Of course, he could reduce falling damage by 80% so he wouldn’t die. But he would drop into the rebel infested tower alone.

‘And it won’t be possible to stop Alan!’

As he was thinking, his body started to fall down. At that moment Ark suddenly came up with an idea.

“Summon Demon, Deimos! Transform!”

As soon as Deimos was summoned he transformed into a sword. Ark immediately changed it into a whip and closed it around an intact railing. It was an action similar to Indiana Jones that he came up with last time while climbing Colossus. When it changed into a sword again, the blade decreased and Ark's body rose. But before he could breathe a sigh of relief, he felt a weight on his body. The rebel caught in the explosion was holding one of his legs.

"I won't die alone!"

The rebel went for his dagger. In this state, there was a 100% chance that he would die.

"Don't quit, you beep-beep-beep bastard!"

Ark used 'Intimidation' on the rebel who flinched and stiffened. However it only lasted for a moment before the assassin swung his dagger. At that moment, something flew through the cloud of dust towards the rebel.

"Master!"

"Dedric!"

"Master, I'm here to help! This guy, take this and this! Fall!"

"Ugh, you damn bat.....!"

The rebel swore and swung his dagger but couldn't hit Dedric. Dedric avoided the attack while stepping firmly on the guy's head and nose. The rebel slipped a little bit every time until he eventually fell. Ark barely managed to creep back over the bridge.

"Oppa!"

Roco ran up to him with a tearful voice and used Song of Recovery.

"Hahaha, what do you say Master? Are you thankful? Eung, are you thankful?"

Ark sighed in relief while Dedric kept on bragging. He had to admit the truth. But he wasn't going to praise him.

'Damn.....!'

Ark looked at Jaerim Tower with a furious face. The bridge had been disconnected because of the explosion. The only way to get to Jaerim Tower from Gyeolsok Tower had disappeared.

“Number 358, is there any other way around?”

“Jaerim Tower has a separate entrance. The only bridge remaining is from the top of Yaksok Tower. But.....”

Nabein’s side had already captured Yaksok Tower. It will take a lot of time to defeat them while climbing up to the bridge. There was no guarantee that Shambala would hold out until then. No, after seeing the atmosphere he would only be able to hold up for 10~20 minutes.

‘Have I come all this way just to give up?’

While Alan was dealing with the Elders and Shambala, Ark was stranded. And he would be mercilessly attacked by the Dark Brothers.

‘That bastard Alan.....!’

He already couldn’t see Alan on the other side. He had no interest in Ark’s life or death. Since he cut off the bridge, there was no way for Ark to interfere. And if Alan succeeded in the rebellion of the Dark Brothers then Ark would die anyway. There was no reason to be impatient now.

‘It is the worst situation but there must be a way I can join Shambala.....’

But no matter how hard he thought, Ark couldn’t come up with a way to cross the bridge. And even if there was a way, Alan controlled the entrance to Jaerim Tower. Ark wouldn’t be able to reach Shambala.

‘Anything is good. I have to somehow find a way.’

“There is only one way left.”

At that time, number 358 spoke.

“Since there is no way to save Leader and the Elders at the moment, we must quickly call the troops back. If our troops come then we’ll be able to recapture Beacon Hill from Nabein’s forces.

“How long will it take to recapture Beacon Hill and reorganize the troops?”

“It’ll take approximately 1 and a half hour to recapture.”

1 and a half hour was 30 minutes in reality.....and it wasn’t just taking control of the troops. They also had to knock out Nabein’s forces. But he was convinced that Shambala wouldn’t be able to last that long. Then the roof of Jaerim Tower suddenly

caught his eye. It was a sharp roof with the end pointed into the sky! An absurd scene appeared in Ark's head. Ark turned his head and looked at Jaerim Tower again before swallowing his saliva.

'Perhaps.....no, there is only a small probability of success.....but if it succeeds then there is a way to get to the top of Jaerim Tower. But I won't be much help to Shambala if I go alone. If I take someone else.....'

Roco came to Ark's attention. Because Alan was a Holy Knight who could use recovery and various buffs, the previous battles had been difficult. It made an incredible difference since assassins normally relied on potions or herbs for recovery. However Ark also had a user who could use recovery and buffs. It was Roco! What if it was Ark and Roco helping Shambala? Although they might not be able to beat all of Alan's forces, there was a high possibility of holding out until the Elders' troops arrived.

'If 2 people try the success rate is low, but this is the only way!'

Ark decided and explained the plan to Roco.

"M-me?"

Roco freaked out when she heard the explanation. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members also had worried expressions.

"No matter what.....isn't it too dangerous?"

"But if Alan joins with the Dark Brothers then there is no future for us. If even one person reaches Jaerim Tower then the situation might change."

"Even so....."

JusticeMan sighed. Roco looked at Ark and grasped his hand as she decided something.

"Understood. I don't care if I die as long as it's with Oppa."

If it wasn't for the situation, that confession would be quite shocking.

"Thank you."

Ark gripped her hand tightly, causing Roco to blush and nod.

"Well, there's no choice but to try it. If you succeed then we can hold up a little bit longer. We'll also recapture Beacon Hill and recall the troops as quickly as possible."

JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members, number 358 and the assassins quickly headed towards Beacon Hill.

The slope of the spire roof exceeded 60 degrees. It was 100 metres in the air while he could clearly see the cliffs stretched out below. He was also carrying Roco.

"S-sorry. Oppa, am I heavy? I wish I dieted....."

In the situation such a conversation made sense.

"No, you're not heavy."

Ark panted while sweat was dripping down his face. After a while, Ark arrived at the lightning rod attached to the top of the spire. When he grasped the lightning rod and looked down, Ark became distracted. The reason why people with high imagination were afraid of heights was because they could imagine themselves falling. Just because it was a game didn't mean that the fear would shrink.

'I have to brace myself tightly. If this fails then everything will end!'

"Hold on tight Roco."

"U-understood."

Roco closed her eyes and tightly clung to Ark's waist. Ark plunged the saw blade tightly into the roof with clenched teeth.

"Deimos, transformation off!"

Tadak, tadadadak!

Deimos once again returned to his original appearance. A skeleton holding a sword and a large shield.

"Deimos, lay out the shield on the ground."

Tadadak?

Deimos doubted Ark's command. However he obeyed the order and spread the shield on the ground. Ark ordered Deimos to stay in the centre and got on the shield. And he clenched his teeth tightly before letting go of the lightning rod. The

shield started sliding down the slope at an amazing speed. This was the method that Ark thought of. Use the shield like a snowboard and accelerate down the slope. And then jump over the broken bridge with a ski jump. If he controlled the angle well then he would be able to enter Jaerim Tower instantly.

'I've seen a lot of snowboarding!'

The wind blew against him like a blade but Ark kept his eyes forward. There was only one chance.....if he missed the timing of the jump then it would be a useless death. Ark, Roco and Deimos on the shield instantly flew over the edge.

"Now Dedric!"

"Damn, you promise? I am exempt for food torture 3 times!"

If they slipped then their bodies would instantly be driven into the ground. They needed something to change the momentum of the acceleration so that they could fly. The one undertaking that role was Dedric. Dedric cursed and stuck to the spire's edge. When the shield touched his back, Dedric instantly rose up.

"Aaaak! H-Hot! My back! My head!"

Dedric had the hair on the back of his head stripped off because of the friction. But thanks to Dedric's sacrifice, the shield flew through the sky just like Ark planned. It was a strange feeling as all the sounds around them disappeared. However Ark couldn't afford to enjoy the flight. Jaerim Tower that was in the distance approached in an instant. If they hit the wall then they would be crushed like a frog!

"Deimos, Roco. Move your body to the right!"

When they twisted their bodies, the orbit changed to a window.

"Lower your body and prepare for impact!"

Wajachang! Tatong, Kurururu.....

The shield broke the window and entered the tower. There was an intense sound as the shield slid on the ground before suddenly hitting the wall.

"What, what the?"

The assassins who had been fighting stopped their movements and looked at the scene. The dust gradually dissipated until the blurry form of Ark and Roco was seen. Ark emerged from one side and surveyed the quiet battlefield.

“Ah, Ark?”

The person who spoke was none other than Shambala.

“Hey, Shambala. I came to help.”

“H-how.....never mind, you’re in the enemy camp you idiot!”

“What?”

Ark looked back and saw Alan.

“Ark.....kill him! Kill the bastard!”

The assassins who were watching dumbly suddenly rushed towards him.

## **Act 8: Ruin Knight**

“Summon release, Deimos! Roco, hold on tight!”

Ark shouted while raising his body.

“Slide!”

He used the swiftness of the boots to quickly throw a kick. And then an amazing effect was displayed. Binggul, binggul, binggul.....when he used ‘Slide’ in conjunction with a spin kick, it looked like he was one of those spinning characters from the street fighting games. Ark continuously use spin kick to hit the assassins while moving forward.

Although the assassins attacked from all directions, his resilience reduced the damage. Thanks to Roco also using Song of Recovery, Ark was able to break through the encirclement and reach Shambala’s side.

“Ark, what are you doing here?”

“W-wait a minute.....uuk!”

Since he didn’t get a chance to rest after spinning, he now felt sick. He didn’t know how the fighters in those games didn’t get nausea. After his nausea passed, Ark grinned and replied.

"I told you, I came in order to help."

"You were definitely born with an ability to surprise people."

Then an NPC wearing a red mask approached Shambala from behind.

"Leader, do you know him?"

"Yes, I fought with him in the Evil Silrion."

"Then this is who Leader was talking about.....!"

The NPC stealthily stared at Ark before saying.

"I'm Isabel, an elder of the Dark Brothers."

Ark looked at Isabel with a stupid face. He had imagined that an Elder was an elderly grandpa. But surprisingly it was a woman with a gentle voice. Ark stared with bemused eyes until Shambala muttered in an uncomfortable voice.

"What you looking at with that piercing stare?"

"Oh, no.....rather.....the situation looks bad."

"So even you see it?"

Shambala sighed and mumbled. Ark could see that the situation inside the tower wasn't good. He didn't have to use Eyes of the Cat to see that the assassins' health was low. Although they already consumed potions and herbs, most of the assassins only had 20% health left. On the other hand, thanks to Alan's buffs and recovery magic the rebels still had 60% of their health. If it wasn't for the barricade then the situation would've already been over.

"Thrust through the barricade!"

After Ark appeared, Alan pushed the rebels to attack even more. One of the barricades fell down and instantly 3~4 assassins collapsed.

"We'll speak more later, but are all the assassins inside the tower a part of your group? Me and Roco can give some buffs."

"You.....so you're with Roco....."

Shambala then noticed the reason why Ark brought Roco along. Once Ark and Roco joined, the situation completely changed.

"The most precious life, the light touch of the Mother will reach out and stroke it....."

Roco also got over her motion sickness and began to sing. Her 'Song of Recovery' restored 200 health for 3 minutes. With 'Gentle Reverberation,' that effect overlapped 3 times and the health of the assassins inside Jaerim Tower quickly increased. Ark also wasn't idle.

"Shambala, collect all of the assassins' potions!"

"What?"

"I don't have time to explain. Hurry up!"

"Pass all the remaining potions to Ark!"

When Isabel commanded, all of the assassins immediately gathered their potions. The number of potions barely exceeded 50. Ark put the potions in his bag and shouted.

"Great Sacrifice!"

50 potions rushed into the sky and a giant jar of potion appeared. It was a smaller jar than what appeared in Silvana, but the intermediate recovery effect was given to allies within 200 metres! Thanks to the combo of 'Song of Recovery' and 'Great Sacrifice,' the assassins were able to regain 80% of their health.

"T-that.....the potion from that time was because of him?"

Alan's voice was clearly audible over at the enemy's camp.

"Courage. We're going to win!"

Then Ark used Nursing and raised the morale and courage of the assassins by 50%. The effect of the blessing increased various stats. These changes had a better effect than expected on the assassins who couldn't use recovery or buffs.

"It is not time to give up yet!"

"We can't possible turn over the Dark Brothers to traitors like them!"

"Our comrades will be coming from the outskirts. We just have to hold on a little bit more!"

"For the glory of Salrin!"

The assassins who had been pushed so far started their counterattack. The assassins in Jaerim Tower had a high level than the rebels because they were the Elder's aides. Because they were numerically outnumbered, they couldn't restore their health after the opponents' persistent attacks. But the rebels were also formidable.

"Bah, they've only increased by two guys! Attack with full power!"

Alan pushed an assassin with his shield while overlapping various auras.

"Alan, this time you won't get your way!"

But the buffs of a Minstrel couldn't surpass that of a Holy Knight. Although they had the momentum for a while, once Alan started pressing recklessly the assassins once started collapsing. In addition, dozens of rebels from Yaksok Tower also entered and boosted their forces. Shambala was pushed to a corner.

"Ugh, Elders.....!"

"Have strength. Salrin's Towers isn't meant to be handed over to such a person!"

However, Isabel's voice didn't have any energy. Shambala looked at Isabel and had his energy renewed.

"That bastard Alan....."

"Shambala."

Ark grabbed Shambala's shoulder and said.

"The situation is simple. The rebels are more powerful because of Alan. If we beat Alan, it is possible to endure even with lower numbers. When JusticeMan ajusshi regains Beacon Hill and takes control of the troops then this situation will be cleared up."

There was only one conclusion. Catch Alan!

"It won't be easy, but if it's you and me then isn't it possible?"

"It's not bad."

Shambala grinned and replied. That was the reason Ark navigated through the crowd to join Shambala. Anyway, the key to this fight was clearly Alan. Once they made the decision, the two of them plunged through enemy lines.

Alan also knew how important his role was. Since he didn't want to run out of mana when facing Ark, Alan stayed in the rear eating while enthusiastically spamming buffs. That meant they had to go through the rebels to get to Alan. There were dozens of them. It wasn't easy even for Ark and Shambala. But it was a different story if it was the two of them together!

"Leader, be careful. You are our last hope."

Isabel said to Shambala before he turned his body away.

"Ark, I'll go first!"

"Okay!"

They used the two pincer movements that they had developed in the Evil Silrion.

"Petrification of Blood!"

Shambala used Petrification of Blood on 3 rebels while jumping at the same time. Then Ark immediately followed with Dark Blade and took them out. Following that the two of them used 'Dark Dance' and 'Blink' continuously. As soon as Shambala created a gap then it would be followed by Ark's kick. Once they fell over from Ark's kick, Shambala would kill them with his dagger. Since it was a familiar attack pattern, there was no need for words. However, the rebels were over level 140 and if they weren't killed then they easily recovered and surrounded them.

"We don't have to deal with all of them. Just push them away!"

"I know!"

Ark used Riposte while Shambala used 'Force Punch.' When Riposte and Force Punch was used, the rebels were thrown in all directions. The only downside with these skills was the delay was greater than the attack. But when the two of them used it, the rebel army couldn't approach. They slowly penetrated the enemy's forces. Finally the white form of Alan stood out from among all the black clothes. Ark's eyes sparkled as they focused on Alan.

"There!"

"If we take too long then we'll be hit. Quickly!"

"I know!"

Ark and Shambala split into two. Then they attacked Alan from both sides.

"These bastards, do they think I'm easy to kill? Holy Light!"

-Your dark attribute bonus has been turned off by 'Holy Light.'

Once the ball of light appeared, Ark and Shambala's stats quickly decreased. Alan stopped Shambala's attack using his shield and then swung his sword at Ark. There was a sharp sound as Ark was pushed back after he blocked it.

'Damn, I forgot.'

Since Alan had been weak for a while, he had forgotten. Alan was a Holy Knight. Ark would be able to defeat him if he was alone. But Alan now had the rebels. The more troops he had, the more bonuses would be added to his stats. In contrast, Ark's dark attribute bonus had disappeared. He was still 20 levels higher, but Alan's troops enabled him to surpass that 20 level difference.

'But now I'm not alone!'

"Son of a bitch, die!"

Ark swung his sword towards Alan. While Alan was blocking his sword, Shambala's dagger penetrated. Ark attacked again causing Alan to stagger.

"Ugh, you bastards.....!"

"Now Ark!"

"Okay!"

Ark and Shambala synchronized their behaviour and cornered Alan.

Pepepepeng, the critical hits kept on landing.

If one attack was stopped then the other side would receive a critical hit. If he blocked the top then Ark would aim at the bottom, if the bottom kick was blocked then Shambala would aim the dagger at his neck. He was a Holy Knight, but even a Holy Knight couldn't stop the two pincer attacks.

When Alan was in a crisis, the rebels immediately flocked to him. However, Ark and Shambala just used Riposte and Force Punch to clear the area of rebels and attacked Alan again. Although it was hard to concentrate because of the rebels' interference, Alan was pushed by their continuous attacks. And the small minor attacks continuously decreased his health even though Alan was a rare tank class.

'Okay, the attacks are on track. He is too busy conserving his mana on the auras then using recovery magic. Once his health falls below 30%, I'll use Blade Storm and Shambala will use Torpedo Sword regardless if the rebels attack or not. Even if it is Alan, he won't be able to endure those attacks!'

Ark was drawing up the strategy.

"Huk!"

While fighting, Shambala glanced to one side and saw something in the distance. And he used 'Blink' non-stop to run back. Shambala was heading to Isabel's location. In the confusion of the battle, three rebels had approached from behind the Elder!

"Danger!"

Shambala embraced Isabel and turned his body around. At that moment, Shambala received 3 critical strikes in his back. His health had already been low from the fight with Alan and now he was in a critical condition.

"Leader-nim!"

"Back off!"

Shambala turned and rushed towards the 3 rebels. And using his tremendous skill, he killed all three before staggering to one side and kneeling. He had been poisoned when he received the critical hit. One of the effects of the poison was dizziness so Shambala couldn't even stand properly.

"What the hell is going on?"

Ark was outraged.

He had known Shambala for a while. And Ark knew that Shambala wasn't a person who would die for a NPC. Of course, Isabel was a profession related NPC but Shambala had seemed to run there instinctively. It was an incomprehensible reaction. Well, that turned out okay. The problem was Ark.

After Shambala suddenly ran off, Ark had been surrounded by Alan and the rebels.

'God dammit.....!'

"Kukukuk, have you been forsaken?"

Alan and the rebels wildly rushed forward.

‘Dark Dance! Slide!’

Ark used Dark Dance and Slide consecutively to retreat.....

But Alan wasn’t going to just stay there obediently. Alan didn’t care about conserving mana anymore and battered Ark with a variety of skills. Thanks to the rebels as well, Ark’s health immediately went through a large cut. Fortunately, thanks to his resilience and evasion rate bonus he still had 5% by the time he reached their camp.

“God dammit, what was that.....”

Ark was about to say to Shambala before he flinched and closed his mouth. Isabel was sitting next to him with tears in her eyes so Ark couldn’t say anything.

‘We missed the chance to catch him!’

They had cornered Alan and were about to catch him. But now that chance was ruined. Roco tried hard and sang ‘Song of Recovery,’ but Roco’s recovery had no immediate effect. Even if it was useful in a large-scale battle, it was difficult to restore the health of 1 person. Even if it overlapped, ‘Song of Recovery’ only restored 600 health for 3 minutes. Ark had 3000 health, so it would take 9 minutes to restore it to 70%. Meanwhile, Alan wouldn’t wait that long.

“Now. Kill Shambala and Ark when they cannot fight!”

That guy did not betray his expectations. The rebels pushed forward while yelling. When the rebels who couldn’t attack helped protect Alan, the assassins fell down like autumn leaves. But that was not the end of Ark’s nightmare.

‘Wait, that shield is.....!’

It was like Alan had hit Ark on the back of the head with a hammer. Surprisingly, the shield that Alan took out of his bag was the Sacred Earth Shield! It was none other than the unique shield Ark got from Colossus.

‘Then I sold Alan the Sacred Earth Shield?’

When Alan went to the mailbox in Selebrid, the scrolls were not the only things he picked up. Of course, Alan didn’t know that Ark was the one who sold him the shield. Alan and Ark both used different usernames on the auction site. But Alan was clearly holding the shield. Then.....

‘Oh my god, if so.....?’

Ark knew about the power of the shield more than anyone!

“Sacred Protection of the Earth!”

At the moment, Alan and the rebels’ bodies turned white like limestone. It was the special effect of the Sacred Earth Shield that gave 100% defense and attack for 10 minutes! When he confirmed the information, he had thought that it was a really cheat-like option. 100% meant it was doubled! So if the normal damage was 100, under the effect then they would deal 200 damage. The rebels who received the enormous buff literally crushed the assassins.

“The most precious life, the Mother of all beings.....”

Roco sung her ‘Song of Recovery’ until her throat was hoarse. Ark also used Nursing and Dedric’s saved skill Defense Aura but they could do nothing against the overwhelming damage. In just 1 minute almost all the assassins had collapsed. And the rebels immediately closed in on Ark.

“Kukukuk, spending money is great.”

Alan smiled warmly at the satisfactory result.

“Oh my god.....!”

Ark was stunned. Who would have guessed? He was choked by his own unique item.....

“The only thing that remains is the Elders, Shambala and Ark. Trample them!”

“Ooh oh oh oh!”

The rebel army shrieked and ran forward.

“Slime’s Time, NO1!”

He had gained Slime’s Time after eating the Slime’s Immortality Pill. It allowed him 100% defense against physical attacks for 10 minutes! After Ark used it, his body was covered with a smooth slime. In that state, Ark embraced the Elder, Shambala and Roco. Although he felt countless blows, he evaded any damage.

“Heung, is that a skill? But that skill will run out. And all the assassins are already dead. The time before they die is just extended a little bit.”

Alan said even though it was annoying. The duration of Slime’s Time was 10 minutes. Although the duration of ‘Sacred Protection of the Earth’ would also be up

in 10 minutes, all the assassins had been wiped out. When Slime's Time ran out, there would only be the 4 of them against 100 rebels.

"O-oppa....."

"I'm sorry Ark. But....."

Roco and Shambala murmured, There was 7 minutes left. He had recovered to 60% health, but that wouldn't change anything.

'Is it going to end like this?'

Ark raised his head. Suddenly he saw a giant structure on the tower ceiling. It was hundreds of tons of melted iron in the shape of an iron palm. The structure representing the Dark Brothers was hanging from the ceiling by several strands of chains.

'Is it possible to drop that?'

But there were several problems. The first problem was that the steel palm was hanging from the ceiling 10 metres above him. There was also magic attached to the chains so it wasn't possible to attack from below. Unless he climbed up the wall, it wasn't possible to break the chains. Even if it was possible to climb up, Alan and the rebels wouldn't just watch and do nothing.

"But that is the one way. There must be some possible methods. Something....."

Then a spark flew in Ark's head.

'Yes, that's the way!'

"Dedric, fly here!"

Dedric who had been surveying the battle situation flew over at Ark's command.

"Master, you're in serious trouble. What are you going to do? Huh? You want me to do what?"

"Shut up and hold still. Summon Demon, Deimos. Transform! Dedric, take this?"

Ark summoned Deimos and shouted. Then Dedric quickly grabbed the saw blade.

"Rise! Head to there!"

Yes, the method he devised was to use his summons! There was no way for Ark to climb up to the structure. Dedric also didn't have any weapons so he couldn't break the chain. However, it was possible with Deimos as a sword. If he transformed into a small sword, Dedric would carry Deimos like he was a small pet. Dedric flew to the top of the structure and Ark shouted.

"Deimos transformation release! Break the chain!"

Ttak ttak ttak, ttak ttak ttak ttak!

Deimos fearlessly swung his sword. Kung, the structure shook from the intense shock. Alan was confused until he finally noticed Ark's intention too late.

"This, this is.....quickly leave!"

"But we're at the top of Gyeolsok Tower and the bridge has already been broken."

"Idiot, we can go to Yaksok Tower!"

"B-but the Elder's troops are entering Yaksok Tower....."

"What?" Why didn't tell me this sooner?"

"I thought we would be able to handle Shambala and the Elder before that....."

The ends of Ark's mouth rose when he heard the rebel's words.

"It seems I'm the winner once again. Alan."

"Y-you.....!"

Deimos who had been attacking the chains finally broke one. The giant structure wobbled. Without that chain, it wasn't able to withstand the weight and the other chains started breaking. Then.....the structure fell apart at a breakneck speed.

Ku ku ku kung! Kwakwang! Kwakwakwakwa!

The structure crushed dozens of rebels as it hit the ground. But that wasn't all Ark intended. He had dropped a structure weighing hundreds of tons. Even if the floor was sturdy, it couldn't endure the weight of the structure. Indeed.....it continuously broke through the floors until it reached the cliff which was 100 metres down.

"Deimos, summon release! The Elder, Shambala and Roco, quickly get on my shoulders!"

The Elder, Shambala and Roco climbed onto Ark's slime coated shoulders. At the same time, the floor broke apart and everybody in the tower fell down. And after falling for a while.....

Thud!

Ark who was coated in slime made a different sound when he hit the ground. It just the sound was heard then it would've seem disastrous, but Ark didn't even have his health decreased by 1 point. Slime's Time invalidated the falling damage by 100%. Fortunately the 3 people riding on his shoulders didn't receive any damage either.

'Huhuhu, isn't the calibre quite high?'

Ark looked at Alan and the rebels with a pleased face. While carrying 3 people, he had fallen a long distance. It was more than 100 metres, so the rebels who already had their health decreased looked like flattened rice cakes. He also expected Alan to look like that. But Ark's expectations went awry.

When Alan almost hit the ground he activated a scroll. Then he suddenly disappeared before his form appeared on the ground.

'[Warp] scroll!'

The [Warp] scroll allowed the user to move randomly. But because it was impossible to move through the sky, the only place to land was the ground. That rule also applied to being in the air. It was an incredible method to invalidate falling damage! Instead of a penalty (?), the sphere of distance possible was limited because it was used in the air. It was an ingenious idea that Ark never even imagined! Thanks to that Alan didn't receive any damage and just smiled.

"I guess your excellent idea didn't work!"

Ark threw a bemused glance at Alan and sighed.

"For someone so smart, you sure are stupid."

"What?"

"Look around before you say that."

Ark still had Alan cornered. Thanks to his experience in Nagaran, Alan had figured how a way to respond when falling.....if there was enough time then an honour student like him would easily be able to solve the problem. However, Alan's wits still lost against Ark. He couldn't understand the situation correctly.

Alan turned his face and stiffened. There was a reason he was able to last against Ark and Shambala. It was because 100 rebels followed him. But now all the rebels in Alan's vicinity were dead. In other words, Alan was once again like the King with no clothes.

"Are you aware that this area is a village?"

Ark replied with a smile. Just like most scrolls, the range of movement for the [Warp] scroll in a village was limited. Even when the scroll was used, they were only able to move in the village. Alan had been able to escape from Selebrid using the scroll because he was near the entrance. However, this was the middle of Salrin's Towers. And Salrin's Towers had already been controlled. Of course, Alan also didn't have a [Warp] scroll left.....

"Now, Shambala. Shall we clean this up?"

"Of course."

Shambala laughed. Alan didn't even have enough mana left since he blindly used it on his auras and skills. He couldn't be compared to the partners who rallied an audience of 10,000 people in the Evil Silrion. When the 2 of them joined forces, Alan was forced on the defensive.

"Ark, as long as I'm alive I won't leave you alone! I'll mobilize all my strength to make you feel true despair!"

"I'll still stop you.....Snake, give me the shabbiest sword."

Ark snorted and made the sword explode. And then Shambala ended the fight using his best move.

"Blade Storm!"

"Torpedo Sword!"

After the spectacular special effects, Alan lay abandoned on the ground. A light flashed on Alan before a helmet fell. He didn't have enough mana to use 'Replace Equipment' before he died.

Noruhein's Helmet (Rare)

Armour type: Steel helmet

Defense power: 65 (+10)

Durability: 31/80

Weight: 50

User restriction: Level 130 or higher with Warrior profession

Noruhein's helmet belonged to a legendary knight with an enormous reputation.

Noruhein was a great commander who struck down the barbarians using incredible resourcefulness and bravery. This helmet was his treasure and stayed with him until he died on the battlefield. The numerous scars carved on his helmet are proof of his prowess and bravery.

<Option: Defense +10, Strength +20, Stamina +10%>

<Special Option: You are able to use 'Bravery in the Battlefield.' Bravery in the Battlefield increases the morale of all allied by 30%. When a commander uses it, he receives an additional bonus to stats and tactics. Mana consumption: 50>

'It will be possible to receive millions of won for this.'

Ark's face wasn't that bright when he picked up the rare item. A chaotic player was guaranteed to drop equipment when he died. So Ark had inwardly been expecting 'Sacred Steel Shield' to fall.

'Anyway, I have to collect it before Shambala gets it!'

Ark quickly put the helmet inside Snake. But Shambala seemed to have no interest in the item.

"Are you alright?"

"Yes, thank you."

Isabel grasped Shambala's hand and replied as she stood up. Ark was the one that saved her so why was she so thankful to Shambala? When Ark made a slightly dissatisfied face, Roco smiled and approached.

"Oppa, you were wonderful."

Well, he should be happy because he got to monopolize the item thanks to that. Ark turned his head and looked at Alan lying on the ground.

‘So he’ll be moving to jail soon? I have a month without seeing him. No, I might not see him forever.....heh, goodbye.’

Ark stepped on Alan’s head. The rehabilitation members came too late but dropped a ladder so Ark’s party could climb out. Once they went outside the entire situation had been sorted out. The subdued rebels were in prison while Nabein quickly had his neck slashed.

That was how the Dark Brothers rebellion ended.

‘Why haven’t I been forced to exit?’

Alan watched the scene where Ark and his companions disappeared with surprise. When a chaotic player died, the unit was usually forcibly shut down. The rule was that they couldn’t connect for 24 hours. But even after a large amount of time had passed, it hadn’t been shut down yet. But there were exceptions.

‘That Ark bastard, he must’ve registered as a bounty hunter.’

If a hunter or guard killed a chaotic player, after a period of time they were automatically resurrected in the prison. And the length of imprisonment was according to the bounty amount. If he died because of a hunter, it wasn’t possible to reduce the time or apply for bail. He was forced to spend a month in jail.

‘Like this.....is this the end?’

If he was a month behind then it wasn’t necessary for him to look at the test results. All his efforts would be for nothing.

“Ark.....!”

Unbelievable anger rose in his chest. Until recently, he had just considered Ark as a trivial human not worth worrying about. But now he had been killed 4 times by that bastard. It was something that he didn’t want to admit. Losing Silvana, experience or stats wasn’t a problem. His pride which he thought was more important than his life had been trampled on and muddled. If he gave up his revenge then he would be carrying the stigma of a loser for the rest of his life.

‘I can’t give up! I’ll kill him. Even if I have to pour everything into it, I’ll kill him!’

Alan vowed revenge and engraved it into his heart. And then a message window popped into his head.

A new stat 'Hatred' has been created.

Hatred (+ 10): The most powerful emotion a human can have is hate. Even if you have to use everything you have or lose your own comfort, hate is the most appropriate power to get revenge.

<Hate can only be created in a player with a chaotic alignment. The user with a hatred stat will gain 1 stat point for every 0.1% increase in their chaotic alignment. In addition, all skills will be amplified by 0.1%. However, any stats which oppose Hatred will be deleted.

'Hatred.....this stat is also possible?'

Alan laughed. He was trapped in jail for a month yet this stat was his only consolation? At that time. There was a weak vibration in the vicinity of his chest. A black aura began to form around the 'Blessing Pendant' that he received after changing to a Holy Knight.

'What's this? While is there a black aura around a Holy Knight item?'

Once again a new message window popped up.

A special item has been triggered.

You have met the criteria of the Hatred stat and have activated the pendant.

Thanks to the special effect of the item you can now resurrect in a hidden location, the 'Ancient Altar of Evil.'

Would you like to accept?

'What the? It didn't have this information when I viewed the item.....'

Alan struggled for a while but he had to accept the resurrection. The name was 'Ancient Altar of Evil' but anywhere was better than prison. Alan's body was already deteriorating. Once he accepted the resurrection his body was enveloped in a red light. He appeared in a gloomy area and his vision gradually brightened. Alan blinked his eyes a few times until he saw an old man. It was difficult to guess the age from that elderly face. But surprisingly it was a familiar face. Alan jumped after he saw the face of the old man.

"You .....!"

"I knew you would come."

The old man smiled and nodded. Alan sharply declared.

"You knew I would come? That sounds like.....! Did you think you could use me for your purpose?"

"It's not my fault. You chose this result."

"What?"

"Didn't you accept the will of the darkness?"

"Will of the darkness? What nonsense....."

"You're the one that didn't say no."

The old man chuckled and pointed towards Alan's necklace.

"The only evidence I need is that you triggered the power of the necklace."

"Necklace....."

Alan fidgeted with the necklace and thought back on the situation. This necklace needed the Hatred stat to work. Hatred was a stat that only chaotic players could get and it increased when your chaotic alignment increased. In other words, the old man had expected Alan to be chaotic from the time he was given the necklace?

"You were the one who gave me this necklace! Was this all a part of your plan?"

Alan raised his voice and glared at the old man. Yes, the old man was the archbishop of the Asyeosu church, Maseutyu! No, he was a follower of Ankh, god of Death. After he disappeared from Selebrid he had hidden here. In the past, before Alan switched professions to a Holy Knight, he was the one who personally sent an invitation to Alan. And he was the one who gave him the unique 'Blessing Pendant' necklace. Thus it wasn't unreasonable to suspect that this was all a plot.

"Not at all, I did not do anything."

Maseutyu shook his head.

"But I knew. As a foreigner, you seemed satisfied with the glory of a Holy Knight. But from the beginning, I guessed that you weren't as holy as you seemed. That's why I tested you. If you could kill and deceive the world by acting as a Holy Knight forever. My guess was right but you exceeded my expectations. You wouldn't be

able to keep up the facade of a saint forever. I just had to wait until you threw off the mask of hypocrisy."

Maseutyu said as he stared at Alan.

"I'm not trying to blame you. You have a way to obtain even greater glory. And you don't have to worry about the fame that affected a Holy Knight because you are a delegate of the Great Darkness."

"Delegate of the darkness?"

"That's right. It is the evil that is stronger than everyone! We have been waiting for the delegate of darkness."

Maseutyu shouted while his blood pressure increased. However, Alan's reaction was cold.

"Stronger than whom? Ha, you avoided the soldiers and ran away yet you claim to have power?"

"Run away?"

Maseutyu giggled at his provocative words.

"I was just waiting for you and then it will be time."

"For what?"

"For darkness to cover the entire world!"

Maseutyu spread his arms and smiled while thousands of red lights appeared around him. Alan only noticed what it was after his eyes focused on it. It was a deformed creation that looked like it climbed up from hell! The demonic strength they gave off couldn't even be compared to the demon like monsters that wandered outside.

"T-these are....."

"This is power of Darkness. And you'll be the one leading them."

"M-me?"

"That's right. You overcame a number of trials and that will become a part of your strength."

Alan stared blankly at a demon and stuttered.

"Just now, you are being serious?"

"You've lacked the most important thing until now."

"What is it?"

"Didn't I say so? Something that could never dwell inside a saint. Hatred....."

Maseutyu confirmed as he slowly looked at Alan.

"You have learned the most important thing to become a dark delegate. Betrayal and death of trusted colleagues. And you came to know the presence of an enemy that you absolutely can't allow to exist. Now choose. You can keep the appearance of a Holy Knight and be derided by everyone who sees you or you can be baptized and join the Great Darkness, where you will get the power to destroy everyone who ever criticized you....."

At the same time a message window popped up.

You have obtained information about the 'Dark Delegate' from the Archbishop of the church of Ankh, God of Death.

You have the chance to be a dark delegate. If you receive the baptism then it is possible to change profession to a 'Ruin Knight.'

If you do then your former profession 'Holy Knight' will be automatically cancelled and all skills and characteristics reset except for your level and stats.

In addition, if you cancel the Ruin Knight profession then it will be impossible for you to obtain a special profession again as Ruin Knight is the dominant profession in this category.

If you change to a Ruin Knight then you will receive a special bonus and obtain an extra 50% to your experience and skills.

Would you like to accept?

Alan looked at the profession information carefully. It would be difficult because he would have to learn all his skills and special abilities again. However just like its name, the Ruin Knight was different from the Holy Knight and it had a strong

inclination to attack. If he raised it again to a certain level then it would definitely exceed the Holy Knight. It was a way for Alan to defeat Ark.....

‘Anyway, it is impossible for me to obtain the second stage profession of Holy Knight anymore.’

“I accept.”

“An excellent choice.”

Maseutyu let out a dark aura as he smiled with satisfaction. At the moment, Alan’s white armour became black like a raven.

-You have been baptized in the Darkness and became a Ruin Knight.

Alan just smiled as he saw the information window. As prediction, it was powerful.....no, the ability was more than he expected.

‘Ark, I won’t die just like this! Even if I have to discard everything, as long as I destroy you.....!’

Then he heard Maseutyu’s low voice in his ear.

“It’s not time yet. But before long you will show the glory of Darkness to the world.”

## **Act 9: Door to a Different World**

After Alan died, time passed until it was once again night time. At the top of Salrin Tower another ceremony was in progress.

“Shambala, according to Salrin’s will you are hereby known as the Deliverer!”

Once the rebellion had been squashed and clean up finished, Isabel once again started the ceremony at midnight on the next day. Isabel slowly approached Shambala and wound a dark veil around it. It was one of Salrin’s treasures, the Dark Veil.

“For the future of the Deliverer!”

“Until the day the clan finds the light!”

Then all the assassins gathered in Jaerim Tower immediately prostrated themselves. It was like a scene where the servants in an ancient Chinese imperial court all bowed to the Emperor. The world that the Dark Brothers came to the continent from might've been based on China. Anyway, the assassins all showed a deep respect for Shambala as he had collected two of Salrin's treasures. Although he was the Deliverer, he couldn't command them but he would have a strong influence on the assassins, just like Ark and the beast clans.

"Please achieve the dream that the Dark Brothers have been longing for."

Shambala nodded his head without saying anything at Isabel's words.

'I see.'

Ark looked at Isabel with a bemused face. Isabel had taken off her red mask for the ceremony. After seeing her face, he understood why Shambala had protected her. Silky black hair flowed down her back. Eyes like obsidian on a pale face. Yes, Isabel was a beauty. She was so beautiful it looked like she was drawn by someone. If such a beauty was in a crisis then even Ark would throw his body to protect her. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members also had the same idea and looked at Isabel with dazed faces.

"Oppa!"

Ark had been staring at Isabel until Roco pinched his side. Thanks to that Ark regained his sanity and stared at Shambala with envious eyes. But it was because of the veil wound around his body, not Isabel.

'By the way.....is that a rare or unique class related item?'

Ark swallowed his saliva as he looked at the Dark Veil. Salrin's treasures were similar to the Three Marvels that Ark had to collect.

'Damn it, I went through so much suffering and almost died.....'

Fortunately he obtained an item from Alan and Alan was also in jail! He would also receive the 500 gold reward! But that was it.

Then Isabel approached Ark and smiled. Ah, damn.....she's really pretty. Even if it was for free, he couldn't complain.

"Truthseeker Ark-nim, you are a descendant of Hero Maban who was a close comrade of Salrin's. I left the running of the group to Nabein because of my

inexperience and it was a big mistake. The Dark Brothers is a friend to the Truthseeker. I wish to apologize for the rudeness of the Dark Brothers so far.”

After the revolt, Isabel finally discovered Ark’s identity. It was said that the one closest to Salrin was Hero Maban. She felt sorry that the descendant of Hero Maban had been pursued by them in order to kill him.

“Well, those days are already over.....”

Ark completely fell for Isabel’s appearance so he was quite tolerant.

“Even though we committed such rude actions, you still came to help our Deliverer and now I am too ashamed to look at Ark-nim and I sincerely apologize for our impoliteness.”

‘If you really mean those words then I should be receiving compensation!’

As expected, he cared more about an item than a woman’s appearance. When it had seemed like Isabel was just going to apologize with words, Ark became angry. But Ark’s worry was needless.

“It was thanks to Ark-nim and your colleagues that the rebellion of the Dark Brothers was able to be stopped. I would like to reciprocate the favour.”

Isabel looked pretty even when she was concerned. After she spoke, 13 masked people lined up behind her carrying some bags.

‘Reward! I’m going to receive a reward?’

Ark was given a bag containing a sword with a red aura.

Gwisal’s Demonic Sword (Rare)

Weapon type: Two-Handed Sword

Attack: 45~60

Durability: 200/200

Weight: 45

User restriction: Level 190, Advanced Sword Mastery skill

The legendary demonic sword that cut down hundreds of monsters on the continent. The sword is so proud of its sharpness then even if it was struck with a rock, it

wouldn't lose one sliver of the edge. Gwisal's sword was even able to cut away the thick leather of a huge black monster.

However, if the demonic strength becomes too strength then it can eat away at the wielder's health.

<Option: Agility +20, Reaction speed +10>

<Special Option: You can use 'Demonic Opening.' It is possible to trigger the demonic spirit and increase damage by 20%. However, Demonic Opening will consume 5 health every second it is used>

'W-What is this? A rare sword?'

Ark felt breathless as his jaw dropped. It was a sleek Japanese looking sword with a sharp edge! So far he had found some rare weapons, but this was the first time it was a sword. The sword did less damage than a two-handed blunt weapon or even an axe. But thanks to the balance it was easy to use and the attack speed and attack power was very good. That was why it was one of the most popular weapons in online games.

Presently Ark was using Lancel's Sword. Even if the offensive power was strong, it still only did 23~35 damage. If he used it in a pincer movement with Dedric then an attack bonus was also applied to Lancel's Sword. But Gwisal's sword did a huge 45~60 damage. In addition, the 'Demonic Opening' option added an extra 20% damage. It was like receiving rain after a drought, as the sword was truly monster-like compared to the ones he currently had.

'I'm a little unfamiliar with a two-handed sword.....but since I have Sword-Hand combat I can use any kind of swords. The attack speed is a little slower but with the high damage it won't make much difference. Hahaha, what kind of windfall is this?'

Now it would be possible to increase his strength by more than 30% just by changing swords. Of course, even with the rare sword it wasn't possible to sell Lancel's Sword or the Saw Blade. Since Dedric and Deimos were the masters of the magic sword, he would have to wait until he found a new magic sword.

'Besides the level restriction is level 190.....since I'm level 180, it will be possible to use it soon!'

Ark packed Gwisal's sword into his bag.

'Wow, this, unbelievable.....!'

"Huk, it's a rare item!"

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members stared absentmindedly with their mouths open. Just like Ark, they also received a profession related item. Roco obtain 'Siren's Harp' a magic musical item, JusticeMan 'Venom Gloves,' Tazza obtained 'Death Knife,' Bul-kkun 'Deadly Armour' and so on.....All the items had extraordinary stats that seemed to suit the person.

"I hope you forget about the grudge and remember our gratitude."

"Grudge? What is that?"

Ark joked around after he received the sword. Shambala just shook his head at Ark and gave a wry smile. At the same time, a message window popped up.

-Your relationship with the hidden 'Dark Brothers' has changed from hostile to friendly.

Now he didn't have to worry about the Dark Brothers anymore. Moreover, if Shambala's position in the Dark Brothers rose then Ark might be able to use it. Ark had chased Alan and accidentally intervened, but the harvest was better than expected.

'Now I just need to persuade Shambala.....'

After the ceremony was over, Ark arranged a meeting with Shambala. Ark poked Shambala's side while giving him a coy look.

"Hey, it looks quite good huh?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Isabel.....isn't she an extremely beautiful woman?"

"Don't talk nonsense."

Shambala bluntly replied but the areas exposed by the mask were flushed. Ark playfully said.

"You still shouldn't fall so much, since the partner is an NPC."

"What's wrong with an NPC?"

Surprisingly, Shambala replied quite sharply.

"What? You would really date an NPC?"

“Why do you have a girlfriend?”

“Eh?”

Although Isabel is an NPC, she is someone who truly understands me. And she is able to carry on a conversation with me. What more is necessary?”

Ark had no answer to that. Certainly.....if the NPC status was removed then she was no different from an ordinary girlfriend. But even if he could understand that in his head, he wasn't convinced emotionally. Wasn't she still an NPC?

“I understand!”

Then, Roco grasped Shambala's hand and shook it up and down.

“Love is beyond all of that! It must be love to ignore everything in your mind and protect her from an eternal death! Yes, it is true love. Now I know that Shambala oppa is truly a nice guy.”

“Uh, is that so?”

Shambala looked helplessly at Ark.

“You must be shy!”

She won't stop talking. Shambala's red face seemed to grumble as he looked at Ark. Ark blushed for no reason and moved Roco away before returning to the main point.

“Shambala, now that you're the Deliverer do you need to concentrate on the Dark Brothers for a while?”

“I guess.”

Shambala nodded. He had heard the story from Isabel already. Currently the Dark Brothers will split into many factions and they were spread out all over the continent. That was the reason why Salrin's treasures were scattered. Because Shambala had passed the trial and obtained two of them, his job as the Deliverer was to find the remaining treasure. And he had to find the Dark Brothers in each region and rally them in order to revive the clan. Ark asked with a coy smile.

“Then you won't have the time to do other things?”

“I'll tell you in advance that I won't concede the map and diary.”

Shambala sensed what Ark was leading up to and said it outright. The items needed for Ark's quest <Genius Alchemist's Laboratory> such as the map, key and diary were still with Sid. Ark and Shambala had agreed that they would fight in the Evil Silrion and the winner would obtain it. But returning to the Evil Silrion just for one match would waste a lot of time. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that Ark would win. He had gained a bunch of levels and skills in Silvana, but after fighting Alan together he knew that Shambala wasn't an opponent that could be ignored. And Shambala had also received the Dark Veil. The Dark Veil wasn't a simple item. Just like Ark's stats would increase after he found one of the Three Marvels, Shambala's stats would also increase and he would obtain some new skills.

However, Shambala's reaction was cold.

"What, are you really going to act so petty? I thought you were busy?"

"Who is acting petty? It will take a long time to find all the Dark Brothers on the continent. I can do the quest in between."

"I thought you would want to complete it as fast as possible for your dear Isabel? So why would you waste time?"

"Do you want to fight?"

"Eh? Why are you glaring? Did I strike a sore point? Have you already forgotten how I suffered and almost died helping you?"

"Did I ask you for help? And you've already been compensated. Did you really think I didn't see you take that item from Alan? And you also got something from Isabel."

"T-that.....Anyway I came as fast as possible to help you."

"Because of me? It wasn't because you were annoyed by Alan?"

'This guy is really quick at noticing things.....'

"Ya, are you really going to be like this?"

Ark was about to burst because of his anger. However, Shambala didn't even blink and just continued.

"I didn't desire Alan's items so I turned a blind eye. But my pride won't let me give up a quest in the game. In addition, there's no benefit for me if I give it up."

"You will gain something. My affection!"

"No thanks."

Ark spread his arms wide open while Shambala laughed. However, Shambala thought for a moment before opening his mouth again.

"If you give me something then I'll seriously consider it."

"What do you want? Don't tell me you want to divide the quest reward....."

"I don't care about the compensation."

Shambala gave a sharp sidelong glance at Ark before continuing.

"That skill you used.....what is it?"

"Skill?"

"I've seen a lot of skills in New World but that was the first time I experienced such a weird skill. The one that changed your body into a liquid. If it wasn't for that skill then Isabel would've died....."

"A liquid? Are you talking about Slime's Time?"

"The skill is called Slime's Time? No matter how you look at it, it doesn't seem to be a skill learnt in an ordinary way.....how on earth did you learn it? And my guess is that it gives you resistance to blunt weapons? When hit by a blackjack, it did no damage compared to when hit by a knife. I guess that is also related to the skill....."

As expected, Shambala really was sharp. Ark gave him the information after contemplating for a bit. Anyway, he couldn't make 'Slime's Immortality Pill' without survival cooking. It wouldn't be a problem even if Shambala knew about it. But Shambala's reaction to his words was completely different.

"Okay, if you help me make it then I'll abandon the quest items."

"What, what the?"

Ark jumped in surprise.

"Were you listening just then? I told you how much time and money was spent just making one. It took me 20 days just to gather the necessary ingredients. And I had to buy the Corrupted Fairy Wings for 300 gold. Yet you want to exchange it with some quest items?"

Of course, if he completed the quest it was estimated that he would obtain thousands of gold. But Ark wasn't going to confess that.

"Who said that you would be the one making it?"

"You can't create the item without survival cooking!"

"I can use a skill scroll to create the 'Slime's Immortality Pill.' I'll purchase the rest slowly. Since you don't have to make it, it's not a bad condition."

"A skill scroll?"

"Looking at the description will be faster than me explaining."

Ark looked at Shambala with a bewildered face while he smiled. It was ridiculous but since Salrin's Towers also functioned like a city, there were quite a few shops inside the tower. Shambala bought a scroll from one of the shops and showed him.

#### Vision Scroll

It is a special scroll that can hold one particular skill.

However, it isn't possible to change the skill after saving it. In addition, if you create an item with the scroll then the result will only contain 70% of the actual stats.

<Number of uses: 1, Advanced skills only>

Ark's eyes widened. Hidden shops often sold unique items. These items were compensation for finding hidden villages. But he never imagined that such an absurd scroll would exist. Shambala's intention was to use the Vision scroll to obtain the method of making 'Slime's Immortality Pill' from Ark. If he obtained the materials then Shambala would be able to make it by himself. The results were only 70% of the actual stats but.....

"Isn't resilience a stat that I can keep on raising? And Slime's Time has two different skills? Then isn't it unlikely I would get both? In fact, if I only got the poison resistance or resilience then I would be satisfied."

Shambala said after he heard the problem.

'Certainly.....'

Ark's face became serious.

‘Shouldn’t I obtain money from this recipe?’ In fact, once he made the ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill’ then he had completely forgotten about the recipe. The immortality pill only had one effect per person. Of course he would care about the pills from other monsters, but Ark had no reason to recreate the ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill.’ Then Ark started thinking about selling it. It wouldn’t be too difficult to obtain the ingredients. Ark was currently level 180. If he hunted the Polluted Slimes or hook bats then he wouldn’t get any experience. Was it possible to give up levelling for the moment and travel back and forth between Cairo and Lancel Village to sell the item?

‘But do I have to make it directly.....?’

Since his hobby was making money, Ark quickly thought it through in his head.

‘JusticeMan ajusshi and the rehabilitation hyung-nims will level up if they fight the monsters giving the experience. And if necessary then I can rally the thieves, Meow and raccoons.’

If they went hunting around Cairo and Lancel then they would be able to gather the ingredients. Although he was anxious about the unicorn horn, there was no reason for the unicorns to perish if one foal disappeared. No, the unicorn horn was a necessary ingredient.

In other words.....mass production was possible! Ark had already confirmed the effect of Slime’s Immortality Pill so it wasn’t necessary for him to eat it to see the effect. It was enough to make the buyers drool.

‘This is an opportunity to obtain a large sum!’

He quickly calculated it and estimated that he would earn roughly 200 gold if he took off the labour costs. If he opened an ingredient supply route then it was possible to obtain a stable income.

‘That is the most important thing in today’s society.’

“Okay, I’ll accept the suggestion but there is a problem.”

“Problem?”

“The ingredient Corrupted Fairy Wings is not available in a normal way. So I’ll get it. In exchange you’ll have to obtain the unicorn horn.”

“I’ll do that.”

Shambala looked a little bit suspicious but just nodded. So Ark added the Slime's Immortality Recipe to the scroll after making the agreement. Meanwhile the items for <Genius Alchemist's Laboratory> belonged to Ark. Although he hated it, Shambala was prepared to give up the items. Ark bought 20 blank scrolls and found JusticeMan and the others.

"Slime's Immortality Pill?"

"Yes, hopefully once you raise your level enough it won't cost too much to make and we can sell it. Although it once has 70% of the original ability, it is a rare skill so it should sell for at least 1,500 gold."

Ark explained in detail the business. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members will play the main roles by opening up the hunting grounds. Then the lower-level thugs could steadily collect the ingredients. Once the collected ingredients were gathered in Lancel Village then he would create it. When the goods were finished then he would sell it at the trading post in Silvana through Sid. The labour costs would be a lot but it was the most effective method. In addition, it was possible to make the thieves, Lancel Village and the trading post in Silvana grow at the same time.

"Indeed.....it would work if we have the thieves!"

"The other ingredients can be gathered through hunting but what about the Corrupted Fairy Wings....."

"I'll send it through the mail as I travel. As it is a magic ingredient, it costs 300 gold just to buy 100."

"Then we can sell it for 300 gold like Madusein."

"And the scrolls cost 100 gold each....."

This was Ark's plan.

He would sell the Corrupted Fairy Wings at 1 gold for one at the store. But once he had set up the slime factory then it was possible to sell it at 3 gold each just like Madusein. Then he would save 200 gold. And if he bought the scrolls through Shambala then intimacy would increase and he could buy it for 30 gold, so he would save 70 gold. So even if it took one month to create the Slime's Immortality Pill, he would obtain a monthly profit of 270 gold. As Lancel Village was where it would occur, the real estate price would also increase. It was killing two birds with one stone. No, if JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members also took the pill then there were a lot of benefits! JusticeMan showed a very positive response to Ark's proposal. The rehabilitation members' reactions were also explosive.

“Really? Then it is good for us!”

“If we eat the Slime’s Immortality Pill then our stats will also increase.”

“Okay, let’s do it!”

However, there was a separate reason for the rehabilitation members to like the plan. Ever since hunting in the secret dungeon in Silvana, the rehabilitation members had been feeling anxious.

‘Hunting non-stop for 30 hours.....that Ark is not human.’

‘I don’t want to experience such a horrible thing again!’

‘Now that chasing Alan is over, will he make us hunt again?’

The rehabilitation members had never hunted with Ark before. It was only when they accompanied him for a short while that they finally knew his hunting style. Once they actually hunted with him they had enough. So they had been struggling to find some excuse to get out of it. So they quickly agreed to his plan and stood up.

“Now we must return to Lancel Village to organize the labour!”

“Yes! Let’s go, let’s go!”

“It is unfortunate that we can’t hunt with Ark anymore.”

“Isn’t it? But unfortunately that’s impossible!”

Ark took out 20 blank scrolls and saved the ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill’ recipe on them. Then the rehabilitation members emptied their pockets and bought another 20 scrolls before Ark saved the Slime’s Time NO2 skill on them. The most important ingredient for Slime’s Immortality Pill was the Essence of Glowing Slime, but the drop rate for that was very low. But if they gathered slimes using Slime’s Time NO2 then that problem was solved.

“Now the preparations are finished. Let’s go make money!”

The next day, JusticeMan lead the rehabilitation members back to Lancel Village. Although Roco was reluctant to go with them, she wasn’t able to run after Ark while he hunted for 18 hours.

“I can’t go with Oppas because of my part time job. But I’ll follow afterwards.”

Roco couldn't always be there when they were chasing Alan but she always caught up immediately. It was because she had the unicorn was a 1000% movement speed. Anyway, Ark parted with his group at Salrin's Towers.

'Now it is time to start a new business.....'

Ark wanted to expand his business to every destination he would visit. But the business would take some time to establish and gain a profit. So now he had time to settle the quest.

'There are two things left to do.....'

Ark decided to stay at Salrin's Towers for a little bit. The current quests he had remaining was the <Find New Settlers> and <Genius Alchemist's Laboratory> quest. However, the <Find New Settlers> quest didn't have a particular destination so he couldn't do it immediately.

'So the remaining one is <Genius Alchemist's Laboratory>.....no, there is also that one thing.'

Ark realized that he had forgotten about an important item he obtained a while ago. He had accidentally discovered it when organizing his bags.

-Lord of Darkness Valderas' Insignia: A level 150 quest starting item. <Requires 100 Knowledge of Ancient Relics to identify this item>

It was an item that he got from Valderas, the boss of the Event Quest in Jackson. It required level 150 and 100 Knowledge of Ancient Relics! At the time Ark had stored it in his bag and forgotten about it. Apart from his Knowledge of Ancient Relics, his level had been too low to start the quest. But now he was level 180 and he had 138 Knowledge of Ancient Relics! Ark re-examined the insignia and the quest information was registered.

### Home of the Fire Draconian

The hottest place on the continent is waiting hidden in the cold North.

It is said that a long time ago, the Fire Draconians hid their home on the continent. After the darkness approached and Valderas the ruler of Jackson disappeared, the area lost all memory of the area.

However when Valderas' spirit was restored in his last moments, he desperately yearned to return to his homeland. Does his desire still remain? There is a sad aura around the insignia that indicates it would like to go back there. In order to console

the regret in Valderas' spirit, you must find the place where the Fire Draconians' secret lies asleep.

<Difficulty level: C>

A red map was written on his map indicating the quest.

'The northern mountains in the magic kingdom of Bristania.....!'

He couldn't imagine how much time it would take to reach that area. The C level difficulty wasn't the problem, but since he had business here Ark was unwilling to travel that far.

'Yes, I'll settle the <Genius Alchemist's Laboratory> quest first.'

Ark decided to keep the insignia for later and look for the laboratory now.

'First I have to get the items from Sid.'

However, Ark had no reason to go there directly. It was enough to designate a suitable place through a letter. Thanks to the 3000 gold slave contract, Sid had no choice but to go if Ark commanded him to.

'Huhuhu, having a slave is quite convenient. I should make use of it before it finishes!'

"Now, should I begin with a new mood? Dedric, Deimos follow me!"

"Okay!"

Clack clack clack!

Ark left Salrin's Towers with a light feeling. And as always, he looked for another adventure with his summons. What kind of monsters and events would be waiting for him this time? His chest was already racing because of his excitement. Ark definitely had the soul of an adventurer.

'Hah.....'

Lariette let out a bittersweet sigh. She had left the Dawn Blade guild as soon as the siege finished just like she promised. Anyway, since the Dawn Blade guild ended up being disbanded the result was still the same..... After that she toured New World alone. She wanted to meet Ark but it wasn't as easy as she thought. Ark's location was unknown after he left Silvana. With no place to look for him, she wandered around and hunted alone. But it was so lonely. And since she had always hunted with a guild, she felt like it was a lot more difficult alone. Even though they were only level 150, it was difficult to hunt ogres alone.

'I've always been protected so I haven't played the game properly.'

Who was to blame?

'I wonder where Ark-nim is?'

Lariette suddenly looked up at the distant sky. Actually there was a way to contact Ark. It was possible for her to know his phone number through the Planning Department of Global Exos. No, even without that she could still send him a letter in the game. But when she stood in front of the mailbox she didn't send anything. She wasn't expecting their meeting to be some kind of fateful encounter. But she didn't want to meet him using such a blatant method. And.....such a vague message might seem suspicious.

'Why is it like this? Why can't I contact an acquaintance?'

Even she couldn't understand why she hesitated.

'I don't know. But.....'

Lariette stopped moving and sighed. Suddenly an old man who had been sitting at the entrance of a village approached her.

"You.....are you perhaps a magician?"

"Yes, what happened?"

"Could I perhaps ask you for a favour?"

"A favour?"

Lariette looked at the village resident in surprise. A NPC's request was usually a quest. However, this was the first time she had been in this town. It was rare to receive a quest without any intimacy with the residents. Perhaps the quest was simple. Lariette nodded.

"If I am able to do it....."

"Ah, it is fortunate. All the magicians refused to stop in town because they were worried. In fact, a few nights ago ghosts started appearing in town."

"Ghosts?"

"Yes, there is no apparent damage to the town but the residents have been complaining since the ghosts appear every night on the eastern hill. Oh, I'm not asking you to fight them. However, we have nobody who can talk to ghosts. So we decided to ask some magicians. So please go talk to them and convince them."

'The quest doesn't seem that difficult.'

If Lariette had to convince a gentle ghost then it shouldn't be that much trouble.

"I'll give it a try."

"However.....as you can see this town is not that rich. I'm embarrassed but the most we can provide are meals and a place to sleep."

The old man said as he studied Lariette's face. It was probably the reason why other magicians didn't accept the quest. The old man also thought that the magicians declined for this reason so his face was worried. However, Lariette just laughed as she replied.

"That will be enough."

"Thank you."

Soon the quest information window popped up.

Ghostly disturbance around the town of Gorno

A few days ago, rumours appeared that the town of Gorno was haunted by ghosts.

The ghosts weep and tell stories, making the residents terrified every night. If you persuade the ghosts to leave or fight them then the residents will provide you with a

warm bed as gratitude.

<Difficulty level: F Quest Restriction: 200 Good Alignment>

‘Ah, that is how the quest started!’

After seeing the quest information Lariette understood the situation. She had a considerably high alignment to good. While she was with the Dawn Blade, Alan and the other guild members completed quests while she took the time to help residents in trouble. Thanks to that, she received a title and her good alignment increased by a lot. The guild might consider it insignificant but she found helping NPCs quite enjoyable. Thanks to the NPC, her feeling of loneliness was alleviated a little bit.

Lariette waited for evening before heading up the hill to the ghost town. But on that day the ghosts did not appear. Lariette once again waited for the next night while hunting. And she waited for 1 hour before leaving and hiding. On the hill a faint shape appeared. The ghost who caused fear in the residents was a small boy. The boy sighed deeply before shedding tears.

‘Under these circumstances, since I can see him I might be able to settle it with words.’

Lariette spoke to the boy using ‘Sensitive Soul’ magic.

“Hey, what happened?”

-Eh?

The boy ghost looked at Lariette with a perplexed expression.

-How can you talk to me?

“I am a magician.”

-Magician.....

“Yes, I arrived here yesterday and an old man in the town told me about you. The residents are afraid of the ghost that had been haunting them for several days. I don’t think that you are deliberately trying to torment the residents.....so why don’t you tell Noona what is wrong? If I can then I’ll help you.”

Lariette convinced in a soft tone. The boy ghost hesitated before replying in a tearful voice.

*-It is because of a devil called Alan.*

“What?”

Lariette’s eyes widened. She never imagined that she would hear the name Alan from a ghost. Lariette made her heart calm down and asked.

“Did you say Alan?”

*-Yes, do you know him? The Holy Knight Alan.*

“Y-yes. I’ve heard the rumours. But why are you crying because of Alan?”

*-In fact, hundreds of years ago I was a squire who served a Holy Knight.*

The boy disclosed his identity in a sad voice. And then the boy spoke about how he met Alan. Surprisingly, Alan received the NPC quest to become a Holy Knight when he was a beginner because of the boy ghost.

*-Before Master died, he asked me to find the next Holy Knight. But that person didn’t appear for hundreds of years. Then be chance I met the foreigner Alan. He was the right person. No, at the time he just seemed like it. So I told him the method to become a Holy Knight.*

The boy explained up to here and suddenly ground his teeth together.

*-But it was my mistake. Alan betrayed the Master’s will and committed atrocities known across the entire continent. Thanks to that he has defiled Master’s name!*

“But it’s not your fault.”

Lariette said in a sad voice. She didn’t consider the boy’s circumstances as a way to complete the quest anymore. He was not the only one who had believed in Alan and tasted disappointment. Didn’t she also become disappointed and eventually left Alan? Then the boy ghost shook his head.

*-No, it’s my fault.*

“.....So that is the reason you’re crying?”

*-No, I’m not crying because of that.*

The boy’s face distorted with anguish.

*-A few nights ago, Master’s gravestone started to be dyed black.*

“Dyed black?”

*-Only one thing makes sense. Alan has been tinged with evil and abandoned his occupation as a Holy Knight. Since the Holy Knight is chained by fate to Alan, Master is beginning to fall along with him. Because of him, Master's soul is now wandering the Netherworld as an aimless ghost. Master's pain is all because I made the mistake of choosing the wrong man. But I am not able to do anything.*

Tears once again fell from the boy's eyes. Then he grabbed Lariette's hand and said.

*-Noona, please! Noona please help save Master!*

“What? M-me?”

*-Yes, I've been crying here for a couple of days but Noona is the first one to stop. Noona is the only one I can ask. Please save Master who is wandering as a ghost in the Netherworld because I was betrayed by Alan!*

“B-but I don't know how to get to the Netherworld.”

*-That won't be an issue. It is possible to make a passage to that dimension using Master's grave. The door will lead to the Netherworld where Master is. And once Master returns to his original form then you'll be able to return immediately. If possible I would like to go but I am tied to Master's gravestone with a Chain of Covenant.*

Lariette had a puzzled expression. All of a sudden she had to go to another dimension..... In addition, she had to save the Holy Knight but she had to find him first. However, she couldn't refuse the boy who was shedding tears. Eventually Lariette braced herself.

‘This is because of Alan. Therefore it is my responsibility too. Yes, I don't know whether it's possible but I can't decline this child's request. Let's see how far I can go. The worse possible situation is that I die.’

“Yes, I'll give it a shot.”

*-Thank you!*

The boy ghost bowed to her many times before leading Lariette through the woods. Deep in the woods was an old tombstone dyed black. The Holy Knight was one of the 7 heroes. At the end of the Dark Century, all the heroes were like Kings in their homes so why was his gravesite in such a secluded place? Furthermore, the boy

ghost was protecting such an old tombstone..... But the boy ghost didn't have time to explain every detail. The boy caressed the tombstone before he spoke in a distorted voice.

*-Noona.....please save Master's soul.*

"Yes, I'll try."

Lariette entered the dimensional door with a tense expression. She never imagined the fate that would be waiting for her.....

Kkuaaaa!

A huge brown monster collapsed with a shriek.

"Huk huk huk, I won!"

Ark breathed harshly before flopping onto the ground. After Ark left Salrin's Tower, he had looked for Sid in order to obtain the items. After deciphering the map with the cipher from the diary, he found the area marked which was a red wilderness. However, the red wilderness wasn't a joke once he entered it. The monster that had collapsed just then was a huge Beowulf that could cause 'Rigidity' with just its gaze.....and it was a level 130 monster. Since the quest level restriction was 150, Ark was amazed and felt like he had been struck by lightning.

'If I didn't have Wind Spirit's Boots then I wouldn't have survived.'

Ark looked at the luxurious boots made of red leather. The Wind Spirit's Boots had the 'Slide' skill attached. The best thing about this skill was that he could combine it with any attack. Fortunately, a new battle style was produced and the synergy effect was beyond his expectations. Even so, it was difficult to fight the monsters of the red wilderness without his darkness bonus attribute. If it wasn't for Wind Spirit's Boots then he would die immediately. Anyway, every time he battled he would have to take a rest. And it wasn't possible to approach a group of monsters in the daytime. Thanks to that his schedule was delayed and it took his several days to

arrive at his destination. But one consolation was that the monsters in the red wilderness gave quite a lot of experience. He was able to gain 9 levels.

“Character information window!”

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment		Good +350	
Fame	6,675 (+500)	Level	189
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the Battlefield, Jackson's Hero	
Health	3,040 (+150)	Mana	3,055
Spiritual Power	100	Strength	359 (+28)
Agility	509 (+35)	Stamina	569 (+20)
Wisdom	58 (+10)	Intelligence	592
Luck	69 (+30)	Flexibility	88
Art of Communication	46	Affection	109 (+10)
Resilience	210		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		138	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.			
Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%			
Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10			
*<King> Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20			

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Wind Spirit's Boots (Shoes): Agility + 30, Movement Speed +30%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Slide' available

Veil of Fire (Mantle): Flame resistance + 50%

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

Mind's Eye (Ring): 'Mind's Eye' enabled

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

\* 40% increase all skills in the dark.

\* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

\* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

\* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

\* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

\* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

'I'm level 189! Just 1 more level.....!'

Yes, the fights were difficult at the moment but once he reached level 190 the situation would change. He would be able to use Gwisal's sword.

'My first rare sword.....what does it feel like? I want to try it out quickly.'

"Aaargh, its cold, cold!"

After Ark checked the information window, Dedric complained while rubbing his wings. It was currently winter in New World. And the red wilderness was literally

engulfed in blades of wind. Even though he didn't like wasting even 1 copper, Ark was eventually forced to buy a thick outer coat.

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack clack!

Deimos who was made of bone didn't know what the fuss was about.

"Shut up, unlike you I have a delicate body!"

"Please get up and be prepared. It is almost time."

Ark stood up and once again wandered the wilderness. After some bloody battles, he eventually arrived at his destination. But after overcoming numerous difficulties, the place he arrived at was a shabby hut. In addition, the only things that had gathered dust inside were books and utensils but there was nothing related to alchemy.

"W-what is this?" Did I make a mistake?"

No matter how many times Ark looked at the map, all the information pointed towards the cabin. No, there must be something else. Then some phrases from the diary appeared in Ark's head.

*The place where the earth is stained with blood, but the world that you know isn't the only truth. Behind the old mirror there might be other worlds you don't know about.*

'Come to think of it, I still haven't used the key!'

Ark started to look through the cabin with some expectations. And he soon found something in a big box. Although it was filled with antique picture frames, there was one picture with a wooden door that he couldn't pull out no matter what.

'Perhaps.....?'

Ark touched the key in the lock.

Kiiiik!

At the moment, the key entered the lock and the door in the picture opened. The space inside the locked door started spreading outwards. He carefully dipped his hand into something that felt like water before he was suddenly swept into the picture.

'That's right, Magaro was studying different dimensions. He must've been successful in his research.....different worlds! The laboratory I'm searching for is in a different dimension!'

"A different dimension.....what kind of place will it be?"

Ark had no fear of landing in an unknown world. Even if it was different, it was still a game so the risks would be similar. Ark just smiled and steadily entered the picture. After a few minutes Ark disappeared into the picture.....

"Did you see? Did you see?"

"I saw. He entered the picture."

"Huhuhu, that Ark. He never imagined that we would be watching."

"Wouldn't there be a huge treasure inside that picture?"

Wearing fur hats and thick clothes, three people entered the cabin. It was Buksil, Sapjil and Ulmeok. The Three Pig Brothers. Before Ark entered the red wilderness, they noticed that he used his cash card at a village and shadowed him secretly. Of course, as merchants the red wilderness was deadly for them but luckily Ark disposed of all the monsters ahead of them.

"That Ark bastard. He only started looking for the treasure after taking 200 gold from us....."

"Because of that our backs are bent."

Ulmeok cried out with a sad face. Then Buksil soothed him.

"But it is okay. Once we see a chance to steal the treasure it is our victory!"

"Huhuhu, I would love to see his crying face."

"Okay, are you prepared? Let's go!"

So the Three Pig Brothers jumped into the picture.

Diririri.

It was late when a mobile phone suddenly rung and vibrated. When he lifted the cell phone he heard a familiar voice.

"This is Wang Ho."

".....Did you find out?"

"Yes, I've found his name and home address."

"What's his name?"

"Kim Hyun-woo, he is twenty-two this year."

"That little bastard.....!"

The one who was mumbling in a low voice was Andel.

"What should I do?"

Wang Ho asked and Andel replied in a cold voice after thinking for a bit.

"Break both arms so that he won't be able to play the game for several months. Once you take photos of the broken arms then I will deposit the payment as promised. Can you do that?"

"That's our specialty. Don't worry. It will be done with no problems."

Wang Ho laughed and replied.

"It is a secret from my father."

"Of course."

Andel disconnected the phone and looked at the game unit with a desolate look. After being killed by Ark in Nagaran, he hadn't logged back into New World. He had heard that Ark occupied the castle after obtaining the challenge right and that Alan had become a criminal. Andel knew Alan's true character better than anyone so he didn't dare answer Alan's call.

‘But now it will be finished.’

Once I show Alan the photo of Ark’s broken arms, he will forget about it. The most important thing is to get rid of his anger.....

‘Ark.....you said I picked the wrong opponent? Never, the person who made a mistake is you.’

However, Ark didn’t only exist in the game.

TO BE CONTINUED

**[End of Book 08]**